■ Entertainment / A30

LVN Studios for sale; filmmakers lament sad day for movie industry

■ Business / B10

Mining firms urge Marcopper to clean up disaster site

■ News / A2

Back RP bid, Musharraf urged

■ Across / A18

Aurora landslide victims decry gov't failures

■ News / A4

Sandigan allows Erap to party

11% VAT rate seen as 'win-win formula'

By Michael Lim Ubac and Juliet Labog-Javellana

A ONE-PERCENTAGE point increase in the expanded value-added tax (VAT) rate, from 10 to 11 percent, is likely to be adopted by the bicameral conference committee to prevent protracted debates on the measure.

11% VAT/ A8

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

BIR insists on church tax: The law is the law

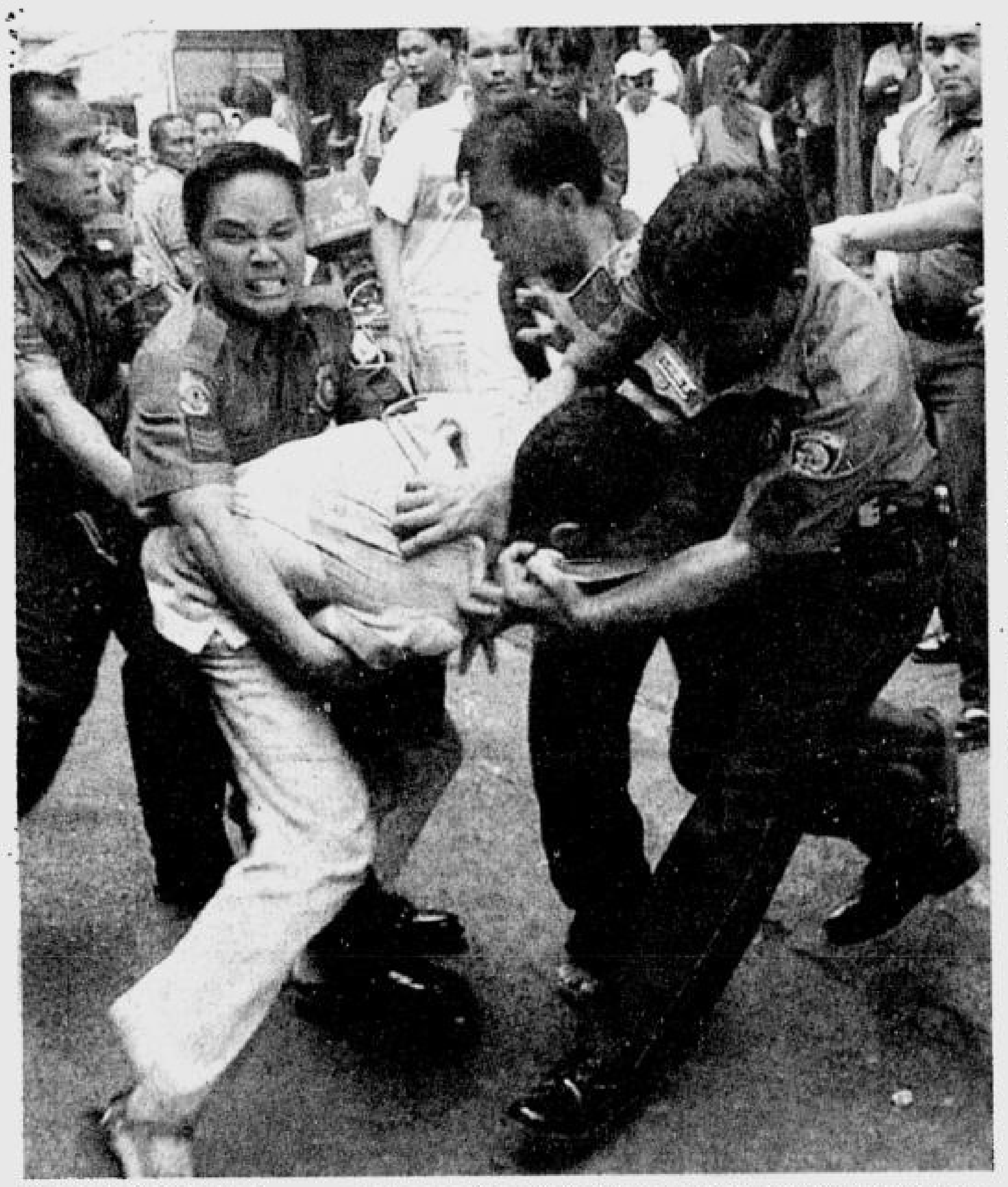
By Armand N. Nocum and Philip C. Tubeza

COMMERCIAL operations of the Catholic Church and other religious groups must be taxed because that is the law, Internal Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno said yesterday.

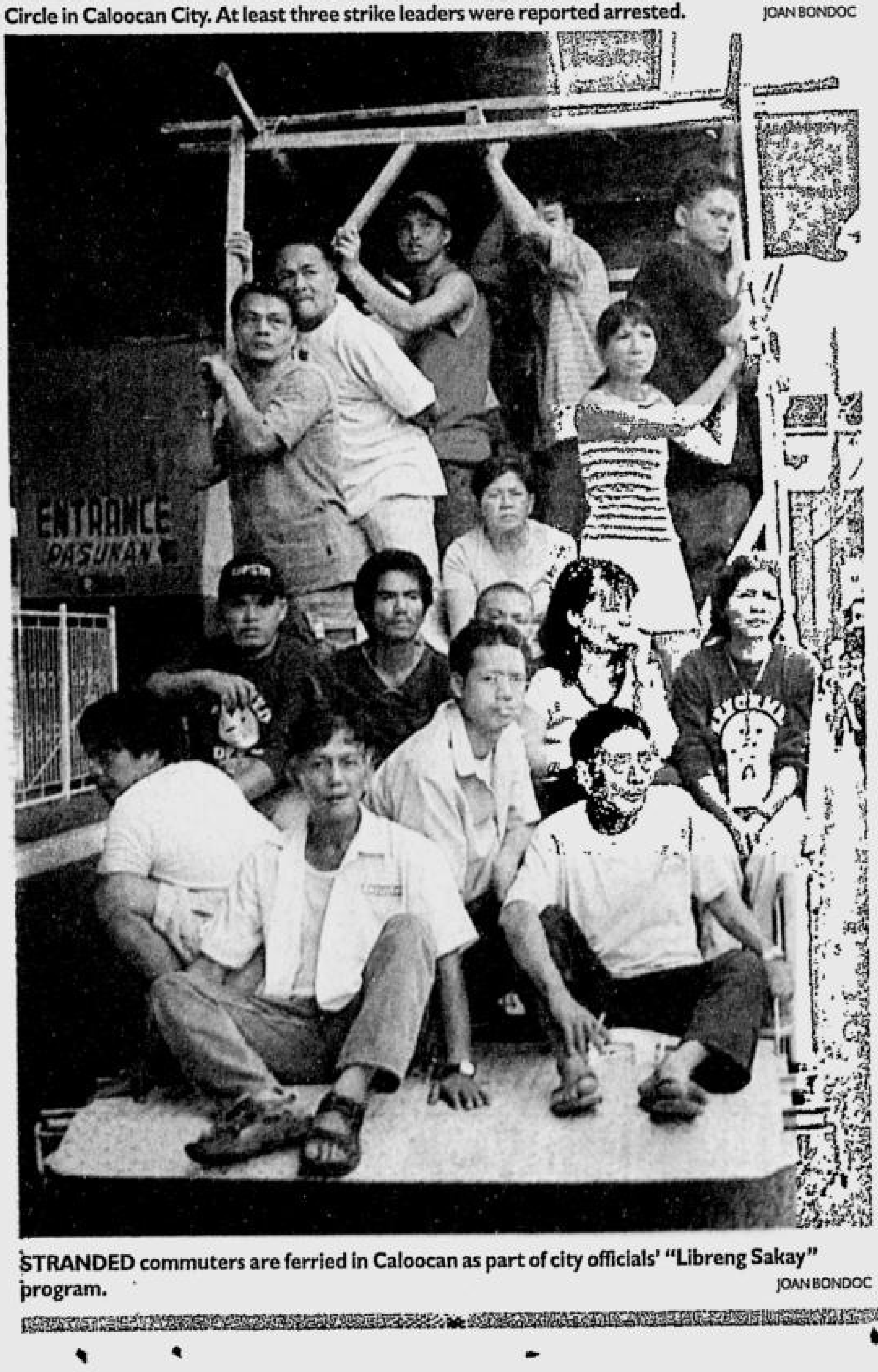
BIR INSISTS/ A8

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Tuesday, April 19, 2005 ★★ 48 pages / 4 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 130 P18
website: www.inq7.net

Strike disrupts RP transport



STREET SCUFFLE. Policemen subdue one of the striking jeepney drivers near the Monumento Circle in Caloocan City. At least three strike leaders were reported arrested. JOAN BONDOC



STRANDED commuters are ferried in Caloocan as part of city officials' "Libreng Sakay" program. JOAN BONDOC

Continued oil price hikes stoke unrest

By PDI Bureaus, Luige A. del Puerto, Clarissa Batiño and Christine O. Avendaño

THE NATIONWIDE strike yesterday was largely successful, crippling 100 percent of public transport in at least one province in Bicol and paralyzing substantial parts of other regions, police records showed.

But the strike had little effect in a few places in Northern Mindanao, including the cities of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan, and the province of Misamis Oriental, the police said.

In most instances, local governments responded by fielding trucks or buses to ferry stranded commuters.

Yesterday afternoon, after a closed-door meeting with key officials of the Department of Transportation and Communication, the strike leaders promised to return to their routes by 6 last night.

But they threatened to hold another strike early next month if the DOTC would not deliver on its promise to grant their petition for a P2.50 increase in the minimum fare by the first week of May.

Transport Secretary Leandro Mendoza said the government would likely grant the petition for the increase in the minimum fare in the face of the continued increase in diesel prices.

Mendoza directed the Land Transportation

STRIKE/ A6

Metro protest largely peaceful; 3 leaders held

By Tarra V. Quismundo and Abigail L. Ho

JEEPNEY drivers angered by rising fuel prices struck yesterday, disrupting public transport in a wide area of Metro Manila, as oil firms again pushed prices up in a move that could further stoke the unrest.

Up to 70 percent of public transport was crippled in the west of the metropolis, 60 percent in the north, and 30 percent in the east, south and central areas, the office of the Philippine National Police director for operations said.

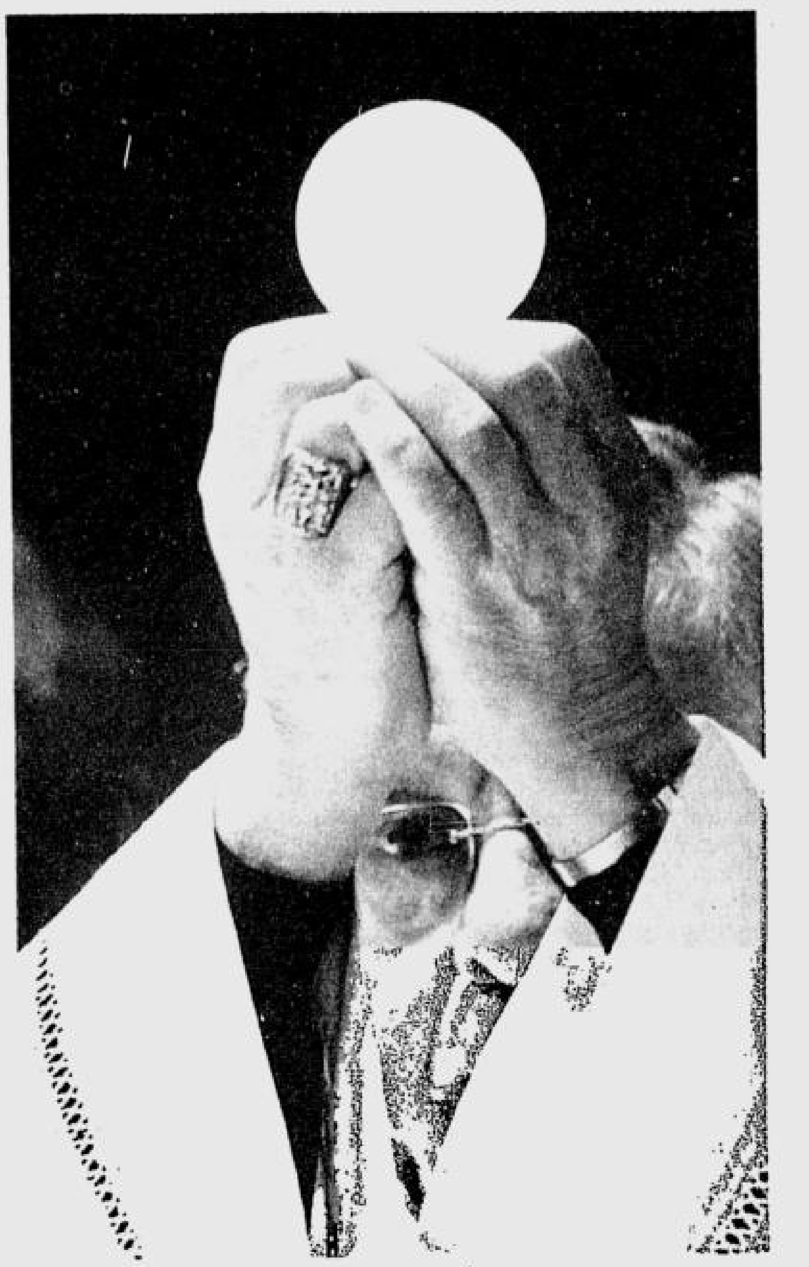
The stoppage was largely peaceful, but three protest leaders—Rafael Gonzales, Atanacio Botana and Mark Padlan of Migrante—were detained after a heated argument with police in Caloocan City.

Television reports said up to 90 percent of jeepney routes in some areas was crippled.

About 50 percent of the 90,000 jeepney units operating in the metropolis was reported to have joined the stoppage, said executive director Angelito Vergel de Dios of the Metro Manila Development Authority.

In Manila, the strike paralyzed 30 percent

METRO/ A6



BRAZILIAN Cardinal Geraldo Majella Agnelo celebrates Mass in Rome's St. Gregory Church. He and the other 114 cardinals had a few hours to confer with aides or pray with the faithful before they were sequestered in secret sessions to choose the next pope. AP

SECRET CONCLAVE

Room of Tears ready for next Holy Father

VATICAN CITY—Bathed in mystery and, many believe, the Holy Spirit, a secret conclave of 115 cardinals opened Monday at the Sistine Chapel to elect the 264th successor to St. Peter, the first pope.

Shut away from the outside world, the first conclave of the third millennium began after a morning of pomp and pageantry, combining ancient ritual with high-tech gadgetry.

One of the first things the newly chosen pope will do upon his election is to retire, with the Vatican chamberlain, into a small room—known as the Room of Tears—at the back of the chapel.

It is called the Room of Tears because it is there, as they don their papal vestments, that previous popes had reportedly broken down on contemplating the magnitude of the task ahead.

In a historic gathering steeped in intrigue, the cardinals from six continents joined a special Mass Monday to invoke God's guidance.

In his homily, German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the powerful dean of the College of Cardinals and considered a top contender to be the next pope, made a final stump speech, lashing out at what he called a "dictatorship of relativism"—the ideology that there are no absolute truths.

Ratzinger warned cardinals

ROOM/ A7

Muslims with illegal firearms offered pilgrimage to Mecca

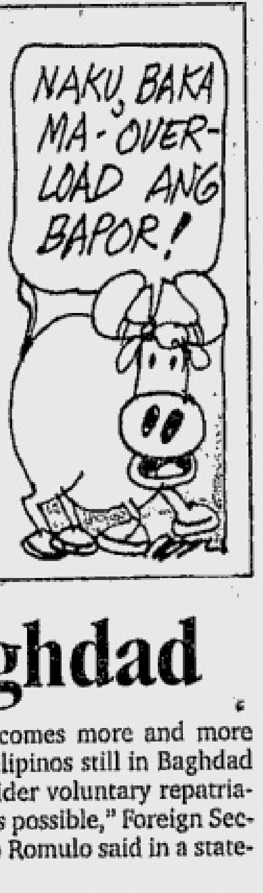
By Luige A. del Puerto and Michael Lim Ubac

WOULD you exchange your gun for a boat trip to Mecca?

Senior Supt. Sukarno Ikbala, police chief for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, plans to propose to the national government a "Pilgrimage for Arms" program.

This would convince Muslims to surren-

MUSLIMS/ A6



NAKU, BAKA MA-'OVER-LOAD ANG BAPOR!

Filipino worker killed in Baghdad

By Nikko Dizon

A FILIPINO overseas worker was shot dead Sunday night in Baghdad, the Department of Foreign Affairs reported yesterday.

The Philippine Embassy's chargé d'affaires in the Iraqi capital, Ricardo Endaya, identified the fatality as Rey Torres, who worked as a security guard and driver at Camp Victory, an American-controlled military base.

Torres is the first Filipino shot and killed in the war-torn country since Angelo de la Cruz was abducted in July last year, the DFA said.

Robert Tarongoy, a Filipino accountant, was abducted by Iraqi militants in November last year, and his fate has remained unknown.

"It now becomes more and more urgent that Filipinos still in Baghdad strongly consider voluntary repatriation as soon as possible," Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said in a statement.

Between 5,000 and 6,000 Filipinos are reportedly working in Iraq despite the tense situation in the country.

FILIPINO/ A8

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao including Palawan will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: ERIKA SARMIENTO, PDI RESEARCH/04/19/05

Second FRONTPAGE

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Text us your feedback: Inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Back RP bid, Musharraf urged

Pakistan president arrives in Manila for 3-day state visit

By TJ Burgonio and Christine O. Avendaño

SENATE President Franklin Drilon will urge visiting Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf to support the Philippines' bid for observer status in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), saying this was crucial to efforts aimed at ending secessionism in Mindanao.

Musharraf, who was expected to arrive late last night on his first visit to the country, will address a joint session of Congress at 4 this afternoon at the Batasang Pambansa complex in Quezon City.

"I am sure President Musharraf, as a man of peace and advocate of inter-racial and inter-faith harmony, will not let the Filipino people down in this respect," Drilon said, noting the emerging world leader had distinguished himself as a promoter of peace and reconciliation among people.

The regional fight against terrorism will be among the issues to be discussed by President Macapagal-Arroyo and Musharraf when the two leaders meet for the first time today.

Musharraf will start the day by laying a wreath at the Rizal Monument at Rizal Park at 9:45 am.

Twenty-five minutes later, the Pakistani president and his wife, Madame Sheba, are expected to arrive at Malacañang where they will be welcomed by President Arroyo.

Musharraf will be accorded full military honors, including a 21-gun salute, on the Palace grounds.

Shortly after their meeting, Ms Arroyo and Musharraf will hold a joint press conference. The Pakistani leader will end his day with a state banquet at the Palace.

Ms Arroyo and Musharraf are allies of the United States in the global war against terrorism.

A statement issued by the Palace last week said the two leaders would likely discuss the promotion of inter-faith dialogue and understanding, the implementation of the 1996 peace accord between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and the ongoing peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Drilon said any breakthrough in Manila's bid to gain access to OIC meetings would pave the way for "sincere and honest dialogue" between government officials and representatives of the MNLF.

"What better way is there to finally achieve peace and development in Mindanao and put an end to the age-old conflict," he said in a statement.

Drilon had issued a similar appeal to Pakistani Senate President Muhammedmian Soomro during the Inter-Parliamentary Union assembly in Manila early this month.

The fresh appeal came less than two years after Pakistan opposed Manila's bid at the 30th OIC Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Iran in May 2003, noting that this would set a precedent and open up admission to non-Islamic countries.

The 56-nation OIC has played a key role in supporting efforts and initiatives of both the Philippine government and the MNLF to achieve lasting peace in Mindanao. The group brokered the peace agreement between the Philippine government and the MNLF in 1996.

Shortly after, a splinter group broke away and formed the MILF to resume the fight to reclaim the Bangsamoro homeland.

Drilon said the government had achieved "substantial progress" in its peace process with the MNLF, noting that a number of MNLF leaders had joined the Lakas-NUCD-UMDP political party to help implement development projects in Mindanao. *With Dano Angelo Tingcungco*

PAKISTAN'S President Pervez Musharraf salutes, as his wife Sheba Musharraf waves, at the end of their three-day visit to India, at New Delhi's airport Monday. Declaring their peace process irreversible, nuclear rivals India and Pakistan agreed to open up the heavily militarized frontier dividing Kashmir.
REUTERS

Gov't, MILF open talks on land issue

PORT DICKSON, Malaysia—Philippine Moro rebels and their government began long-delayed talks in Malaysia on Monday to thresh out the issue of ancestral land, the biggest hurdle to ending a three-decade insurgency.

The separatist rebellion in the south of the mainly Roman Catholic country has killed at least 120,000 people, stunted development of the resource-rich southern island of Mindanao, and clouded the overall investment climate in the Philippines.

Since 1997, when the stuttering talks first started, the government and the 11,000-strong Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have agreed on a truce and a package to rebuild conflict areas of Mindanao.

Manila and MILF officials voiced hopes of progress over the ancestral land issue during the three-day "technical meetings" at Malaysia's seaside town of Port Dickson.

"Both sides have a very positive outcome from the opening statements I heard this morning," retired Gen. Rodolfo Garcia, who attended the meeting, told Reuters.

"We are both committed to finding a solution to the centuries-old problem in the southern Philippines," he said.

Garcia is a member of the peace panel but not part of the technical group involved in this week's talks.

The MILF claims a wide swathe of Muslim-majority areas in the south it says is the ancestral homeland of the Moro people.

A recent mining law allowing foreign companies to have concessions in rebel territories added a new dimension to the talks, with the MILF insisting it should be consulted before any deals are signed.

Air strikes

Air strikes launched on Friday by the Philippine military on a rebel base in a marshy region on southern Mindanao island drew protests from the MILF, but did not keep rebel representatives from traveling to Malaysia, which helped broker the talks.

The attack, which the Army claimed was directed against the Abu Sayyaf, a small militant group with links to al-Qaida, killed three MILF rebels.

"We are hopeful a compromise could be reached at the end of the three-day technical meeting," MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu told Reuters.

"We're not worried over the latest ceasefire violation. It's being addressed at the level of the ceasefire panel. We remain committed to the peace talks," he said.

Kabalu said there were growing pressures from Mindanao Muslim communities to quickly conclude the peace talks.

The MILF's chief negotiator, Mohaqher Iqbal, told Reuters on Wednesday that he hoped for a positive outcome to the talks despite some "rough sailing."

The government team, led by Secretary Silvestre Afable Jr., said over the weekend it expected an "interim agreement" on the issue of ancestral land.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar visited Mindanao last week and gave assurances that his country was committed to the talks until a peace deal was reached.

Malaysia also heads a 60-member team of monitors overseeing the truce with the rebels that has held—despite occasional flare-ups of violence—since it was reimposed in July 2003.
Reuters

It's Sino leader's turn next week

AFTER the Pakistani president, it's the turn next week of Chinese President Hu Jintao to pay a state visit to the Philippines.

President Macapagal-Arroyo mentioned the visit of the Chinese leader during an interview with reporters in Paracale, Camarines Norte, yesterday.

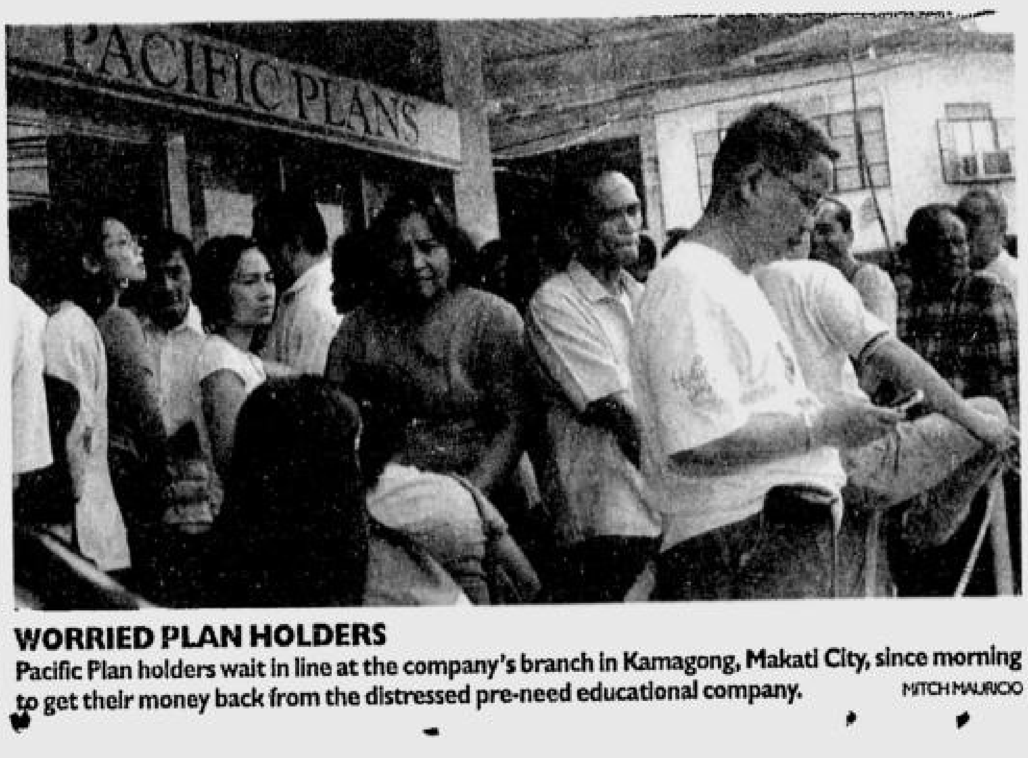
The President was in the Bicol province to visit the site of a $30-million iron mining project put up by Chinese investors.

"This is a very good prelude to the visit of the President of China, President Hu Jintao, to the Philippines next week," Ms Arroyo said, as she thanked the Chinese investors who joined her on-site visit to the mining project.

The project was finalized in September last year during President Arroyo's state visit to Beijing where she witnessed the signing of the joint venture agreement. The mining project aims to produce at least 200,000 metric tons of processed iron ore annually.

An ecstatic President Arroyo pointed out that the project was signed in September last year and is already being implemented six months after.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said Hu would be in the country from April 26 to April 28.
Christine O. Avendaño



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ISUZU 6W TANK LORRY SINGLE-EYE (1 of 5 Tanker Trucks)
FUSO 10W SELF-LOADER TRUCK
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Marcos victims seek award of Colorado ranch

DENVER—Thousands of Filipino victims of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos' police forces are asking a federal judge to give them a 210-hectare Colorado ranch they say Marcos secretly bought.

The request, made in a lawsuit filed Friday in federal court, comes as the plaintiffs seek to collect $2 billion that a jury in Honolulu awarded them in 1995 after finding Marcos responsible for executions, disappearances and torture.

The lawsuit alleges the JL Ranch in El Paso County, which includes Colorado Springs, was purchased for Marcos in 1979.

It is now controlled by a corporation registered in the Netherlands Antilles known as Denman Investment Corp.

Company representatives could not be located for comment late Friday.

There was no immediate indication how much the JL Ranch is worth.

None of the plaintiffs has received any money as appeals have dragged out over the past decade.

Marcos was brought to Hawaii by the United States in 1986 after being deposed in a popular uprising. He died there in 1989. *AP*

MARCOS

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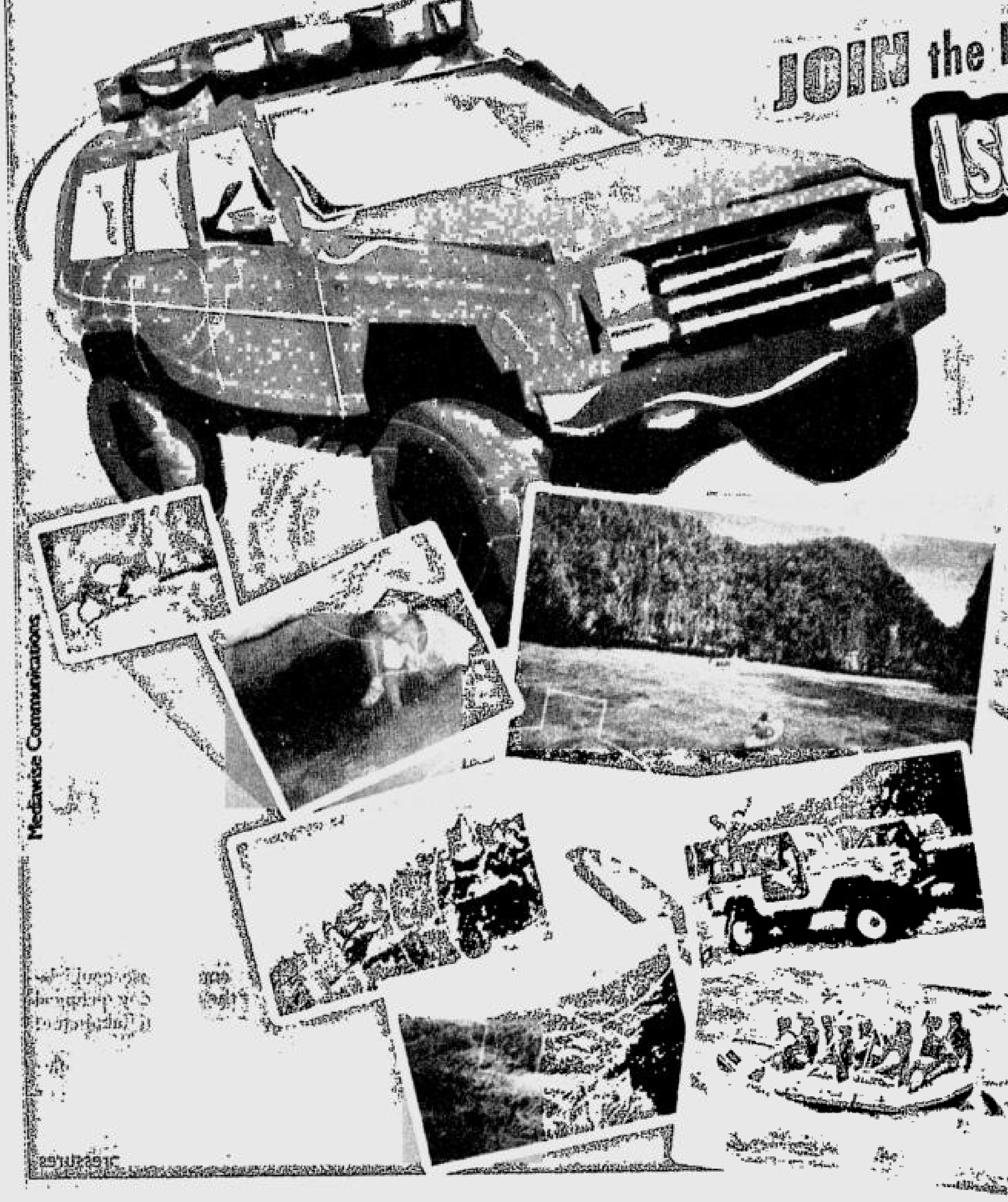

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Featuring 35 teams, each team shall be composed of 3 persons, one of whom will be required to compete in adventure sports and tourism activities at the control points and segment stops. At the end of each day, racers, visitors, and race spectators can revel at the Pit Stop in a nightly celebration of festivals, concerts and trade exhibits.

Cash Prizes at stake: P1 Million, P300,000 and P100,000 for the top 3 winners including trophies, awards and recognition.

The contest is open to the public. All participants must be licensed, with auto insurance and driving "street legal" vehicles.
Registration of participants ends **April 22, 2005.**

For registration, requirements and other information, call the
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8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mondays through Thursdays
and look for *Anabelle* or *Faye* or call the DOT Regional Office in your area.

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- *Tourism Secretary Joseph H. Durano*

"Wow Philippines!"
- *President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo*

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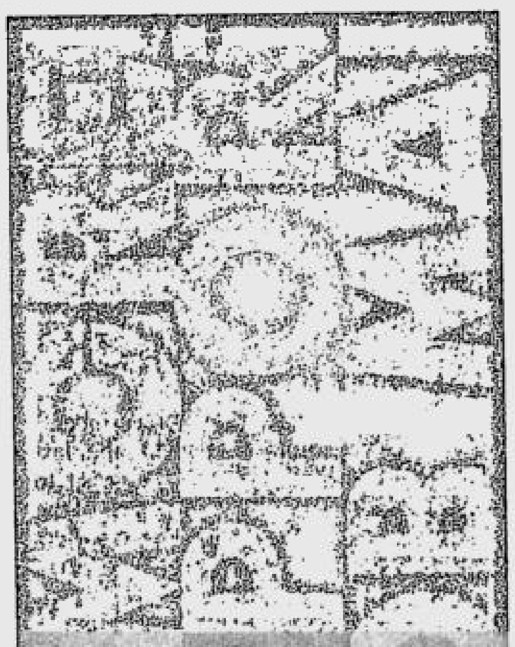

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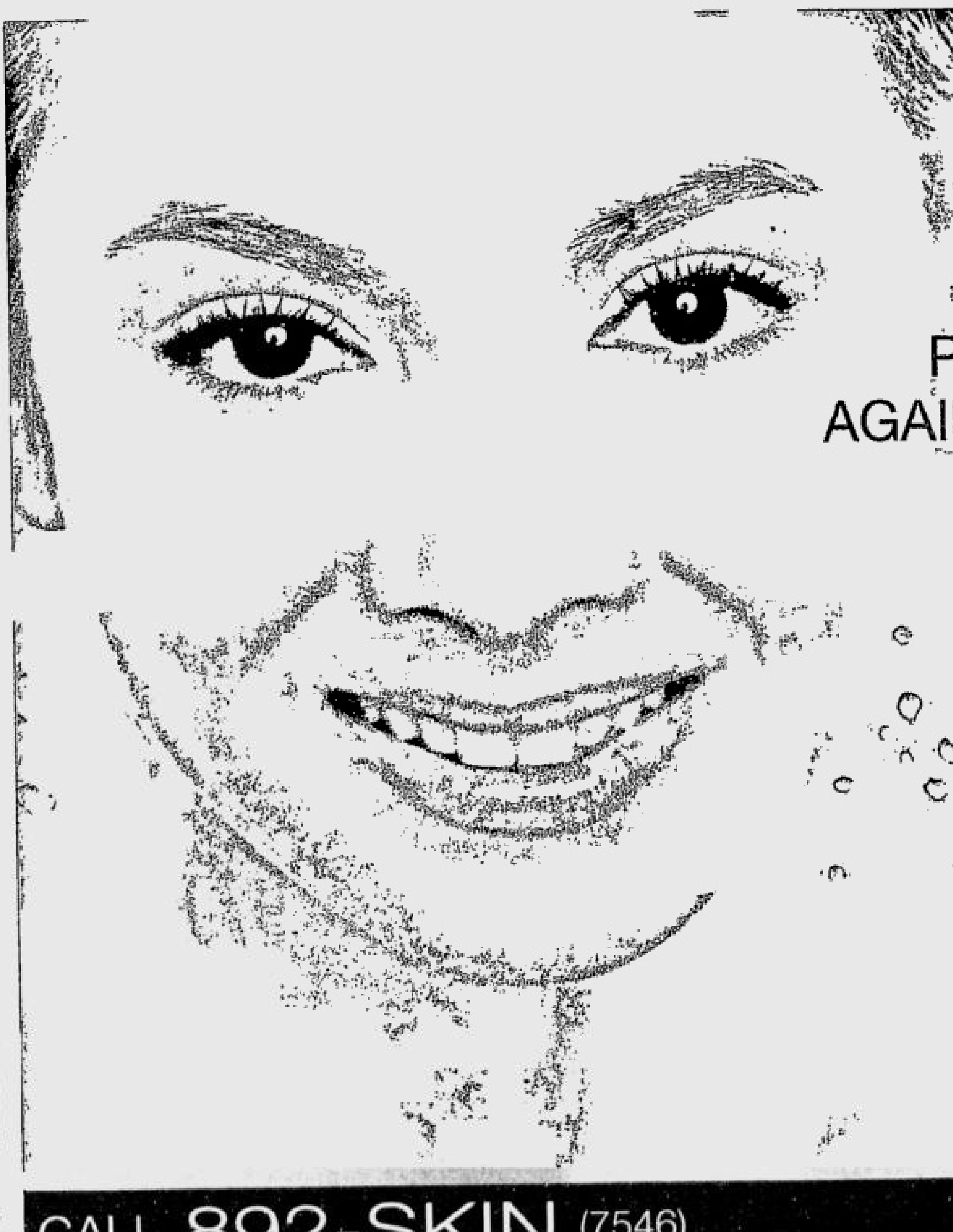

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Court asked to arrest Garcias now

By Norman Bordadora

OMBUDSMAN Simeon Marcelo yesterday asked the Sandiganbayan to immediately issue warrants of arrest for Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia (ret.) and the members of his family in connection with the P303-million plunder case filed against them before the antigraft court.

Marcelo said the government has a strong case against Garcia, his wife Clarita and their children Ian Carl, Juan Pablo and Timothy Mark.

"The probability of flight is high," Marcelo told reporters yesterday.

"You're facing a plunder case and you face life imprisonment or even death. It's human nature (to try and flee)," the Ombudsman said.

Marcelo last week informed the Sandiganbayan of the need for the warrants after the prosecution in the general court-martial currently trying Garcia submitted its formal offer of evidence against the retired general for violation of two Articles of War.

These were Article 96 for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman and Article 97 for acts prejudicial to good order and military discipline.

Verdict expected

According to Marcelo, the court-martial may come up with a decision when it meets on Friday after the defense appeared disinterested in filing a reply to the prosecution's offer of evidence.

"If this happens, a verdict may be handed down on the same day. Even a verdict adverse to the accused presents a very grave situation where the accused might be allowed to walk free," Marcelo said.

Marcelo said he expects the general court-martial to simply mete out a dishonorable discharge and administrative fines against Garcia who stands accused of amassing illegal wealth.

Garcia is charged with unduly earning hundreds of millions of pesos from kickbacks while serving as comptroller of the AFP.

In December 2003, two of his sons were arrested at the San Francisco, California, international airport while trying to sneak $100,000 in cash into the US.

Their mother, in an attempt to clear her sons and recover the seized funds, wrote US authorities telling them the $100,000 was part of the "gratitude money" military suppliers and contractors regularly gave to her husband.

Probe rekindled

US officials promptly informed Philippine military authorities of the arrests but the investigation of Garcia and his unexplained wealth quickly went nowhere.

In mid-2004, news of the Garcia sons' arrest began coming out in the media and the military and the Ombudsman rekindled the investigation.

Aside from cash, lands, homes and vehicles in the Philippines, the Garcias were also found to own real estate in the US. All told, the unexplained wealth of the Garcias totaled P303 million.

Last week, Marcelo asked the Bureau of Immigration to place the Garcias on its watch list to prevent the family from leaving the country. Clarita Garcia is believed to be in Philippines while the children are thought to be in the US where they, including their father, contrary to Philippine law, are green card holders.

Sandigan OKs bash for Erap's 67th birthday

NO CELLPHONE CAMERA FIREARMS FOR INSPECTI

OUSTED president Joseph Estrada leaves his military detention quarters escorted by armed soldiers at Camp Capinpin Monday to transfer to his nearby private villa. AFP PHOTO

THE SANDIGANBAYAN yesterday granted former President Joseph Estrada another opportunity to celebrate his birthday in the company of friends and loved ones.

If friends from show business showed up at an early celebration last week, political allies in the opposition and his classmates are expected to greet Estrada today, his 67th birthday.

And this time, even "former" enemies have been invited.

Estrada spokesperson Ferdie Ramos said Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, the deposed leader's son, had extended an invitation to President Macapagal-Arroyo and Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, who blew the whistle on Estrada's alleged illegal activities which led to his ouster.

Ramos said Estrada had forgiven those behind his downfall in 2001.

"[Interior] Secretary Angelo Reyes and Sen. Manuel Villar have already visited him in Tanay this year. These four people are probably the ones most responsible for his fall," Ramos said.

In a two-page resolution, the Sandiganbayan special division hearing Estrada's plunder trial allowed him to receive visitors and well-wishers at his 15-ha property and rest house in Tanay, Rizal, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. today.

For the occasion, the Sandiganbayan ordered the PNP to ensure the safety of all the guests who would be attending.

The use of cell phones will only be allowed with the okay of the PNP officers on duty while media interviews will not be granted.

"He should not even be there (at his rest house)," said special prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, reacting to the defense motion asking for another birthday party for Estrada.

"Imagine the nightmare of having to secure people in a (huge) property," Villa-Ignacio said.

Last week, the antigraft court allowed Estrada to receive friends, mostly from show business, for an advance birthday celebration during which he unveiled a memorial to his close friend, the late actor and presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. His guests included Poe's widow, Susan Roces. *Norman Bordadora*

No P3B in Velarde account, says witness

By Norman Bordadora

FORMER bank executive Beatriz Bagsit yesterday told the Sandiganbayan that the two Equitable-PCIBank accounts in the name of Jose Velarde never held P3 billion at any one time since they were opened in 1999 up to the time they were closed in 2000.

Bagsit's testimony was meant to disprove the charge that then President Joseph Estrada had "unjustly enriched himself" by taking *jueteng* kickbacks amounting to P3.2 billion and depositing these in the Jose Velarde accounts as charged by the Ombudsman.

Bagsit was one of the EPCIB executives that handled the Velarde accounts. The defense witness had earlier testified that the Velarde accounts were owned by businessman Jaime Dichavez, not Estrada.

"No, ma'am, the transaction logs didn't show that the accounts contained P3 billion at any one time," Bagsit replied during direct examination by defense lawyer Cleofe Verzola.

When it was its turn to question the witness, the prosecution asked the former bank executive to sum up all the monies that had gone into both accounts.

The court then went into recess and Bagsit added up all the deposits to the Velarde accounts. Bagsit later told the court the total in both savings and checking accounts ran up to P2,168,523,085.

She admitted, however, that while her computation included all the transactions in the credit column of the transaction logs, she "didn't include (those covered by) credit memos."

"I'm sure that if you include the credit memos (instructions to credit certain amounts to the accounts), the amount will reach P3 billion," senior state prosecutor Villa-Ignacio told reporters after yesterday's court proceedings.

Villa-Ignacio's cross-examination focused on Bagsit's alleged special handling of the accounts.

"We are going to show the court that (Bagsit) was laundering money for (Estrada)," Villa-Ignacio said, amid objections from the defense lawyers who said his line of questioning was not in accordance with the rules on cross-examination.

The defense said Villa-Ignacio's questions did not cover issues taken up during Bagsit's direct examination.

Villa-Ignacio, however, was allowed by the court to present a letter that showed Bagsit's acknowledgment of six checks she had received from lawyer Edward Serapio totaling more than P200 million in April 2000.

The letter also contained handwritten instructions from Serapio for Bagsit to deposit the checks in another secret account before depositing these on a staggered basis in the Velarde savings account.

Villa-Ignacio asked Bagsit where the checks had come from and the latter said they had come from EPCIB branches in Quezon City.

"Why was she involved in these transactions when she was supposedly involved only in Makati operations?" Villa-Ignacio told reporters.

Villa-Ignacio said Bagsit's testimony that the Velarde accounts did not contain P3 billion as charged by the Ombudsman would have little effect on the government's case.

"The law only requires the involvement of P50 million to constitute plunder. Here, we still have more than P2 billion," Villa-Ignacio said.

Bagsit was an EPCIB first vice president who was in charge of its Makati branches. Early in the Estrada trial, Antonio Fortuno, EPCIB operations officer at its Pacific Star-Makati branch, said it was Bagsit who opened a P200 million "bearer account" for the Erap Muslim Youth Foundation, in which she was the assistant treasurer.

NEW INSPECTORS

PNP Director General. Arturo Lomibao pins a shoulder loop on Melany Martirez making her a police inspector during pinning ceremonies at Camp Crame Monday. Lomibao swore into the police officers corps 153 new graduates of the Philippine National Police Academy. VAL HANDUMON

Agri chief finds ally in PCA row

By Leila B. Salaverria

AGRICULTURE Secretary Arthur Yap gained an ally in his predecessor Leonardo Montemayor, who said yesterday that Philippine Coconut Authority head Evangeline Valbuena was making an issue out of nothing by opposing the proposed P8.4 billion hybrid coconut nursery project in Agusan del Sur.

Valbuena earlier claimed that Yap had pressured her to approve the project. She resigned after Malacañang announced that it had started looking for her replacement.

Montemayor said the Agusan project was still a proposal and had long to go before it could reach the implementation stage. He said the parties involved had yet to even conduct a feasibility study about the project.

"*Nagtataka ako bakit yung bata nasa loob pa ng tiyan pinagsasalita na* (I am wondering why a child who is still inside the womb is already expected to talk)," Montemayor said at the Kapihan sa Manila Hotel forum. "Why is it being an issue when it's not an issue?"

VEEP POLL PROTEST

Kabayan wants Loren to plunk down P12M for recount of vote

By Cynthia D. Balana

VICE President Noli de Castro yesterday asked the Supreme Court to require former Sen. Loren Legarda to plunk down a cash deposit of P11.7 million to cover the expenses in the election protest she had filed against him.

The money is a down payment for the P18.7 million it is estimated the recount of contested ballots in 22,800 precincts in six provinces would cost.

Through his lawyers, Romulo Macalintal, Armando Marcelo and Alberto Agra, De Castro filed an omnibus motion, a manifestation covering all aspects of the election protest before the high court sitting as the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET).

"We want to dispel any claim that the Vice President is out to delay her [Legarda's] protest. This omnibus motion will set it in motion," Macalintal told the INQUIRER.

De Castro also asked the PET to order Legarda to set the number of revision teams that would recount the ballots and election returns, fix the compensation of revisors, and call a preliminary conference before the recount begins.

Legarda had asked for a recanvass of election returns in five provinces and nine municipalities involving 12,105 precincts, as well as a revision or recount of ballots in 39 provinces and five cities involving 124,400 precincts.

De Castro said there was a need to expedite the PET proceedings by asking Legarda to fulfill the requirements for a recount so the revision of ballots and examination of election documents could be completed within a year.

Rule 34 of the PET Rules of Procedure provides that all expenses for bringing and returning of ballot boxes and election documents or paraphernalia before the tribunal, as well as the compensation of the revisors, shall be charged to the party requesting the revision and paid from the cash deposit.

Rule 30, on the other hand, sets a cash deposit of P500 for each protested precinct.

DE CASTRO

Macalintal said the rates they quoted were based on the 1998 election protest of Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago against President Fidel Ramos.

He said a preliminary conference was necessary to arrive at the rate to be pegged by the PET.

Legarda and De Castro are entitled to 25 revisors each.

Macalintal said Legarda should also pay for the salaries of all 50 revisors, plus the head PET revisor, as well as De Castro's lawyers who would be monitoring his revisors.

He said De Castro would only pay for the legal services of the lead counsels. *With Armand N. Nocum*

Church, civic groups at loggerheads over key moral issues

AS CARDINALS went into their secret conclave yesterday in the Vatican City to elect a new pope, far away in the Philippines the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on morals is crashing into harsh reality.

In this predominantly Roman Catholic Southeast Asian nation of 84 million people, the Church still holds enormous influence over the daily lives of the population and the state.

There is no divorce. Abortion is illegal, contraception seldom used.

But with the population growing at 2.3 percent annually, the Philippines is sitting on a demographic timebomb which has pitted advocates of birth control against the Church.

Because divorce is illegal, more and more young people are living together rather than taking the church wedding route of their parents.

Prostitution, both adult and child, is rife and the country has become a major destination in the booming global sex tourism industry.

As one foreign NGO worker told AFP: "Issues such as prostitution, divorce and abortion are seldom discussed in this country. Much of the work in birth control is left to the NGOs because the government will not confront the church on the issue.

"Everyone knows the problems but no one is game enough to confront them head on." The NGO worker, who did not want to be named, said: "With over half the population living on less than two dollars, it is not hard to see why prostitution and sex tourism flourish in this country." A private bill, the Responsible Parenthood and Population Act, proposes to restrict families to two children, introduce sex education and enable the distribution of contraceptives.

The legislation has so incensed the church that it has threatened not to administer communion to any government worker promoting the bill.

Monsignor Jesus Dosado, of Ozamiz City, has vowed that any government worker who promotes what he calls "the bill's anti-life policies" is "not worthy to receive the body of Christ (Holy Communion) and will be refused". Commission on Population executive director Tomas Osias said recently the country urgently needed a population policy to stop the worsening maternal and child deaths brought about by unplanned pregnancies.

The UN Population Fund has estimated that more than 400,000 women put their lives at risk each year by having abortions, which are still illegal.

A survey conducted by the polling group Social Weather Station last year found about 20 percent of Filipino women aged between 18-24 admitted taking contraceptive pills.

The survey also showed 70 percent of Filipinos were not using any family planning methods. *AFP*

NBI told to secure gov't lawyers in Esperat case

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice has directed the National Bureau of Investigation to provide security to the prosecutors handling the case of a newspaper columnist who was shot dead in Sultan Kudarat on March 24.

"This is the first time we received such a directive from the justice secretary," NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said, referring to the security given to the special prosecutor and provincial prosecutor of Kidapawan, North Cotabato in charge of Marlene Esperat's murder case.

"There is really a need to provide them with security especially with the mastermind still on the loose," Wycoco said.

He said the Task Force Esperat had filed murder charges against alleged gunman Jerry Cabayag, lookouts Randy Grecia and Estanislao Vismanos Jr., and one of the suspected masterminds identified as Rowie Barua.

Esperat, an anti-corruption crusader and a columnist in the local community newspaper The Midland Review, was gunned down inside her house in Tacurong, Sultan Kudarat while eating with her family.

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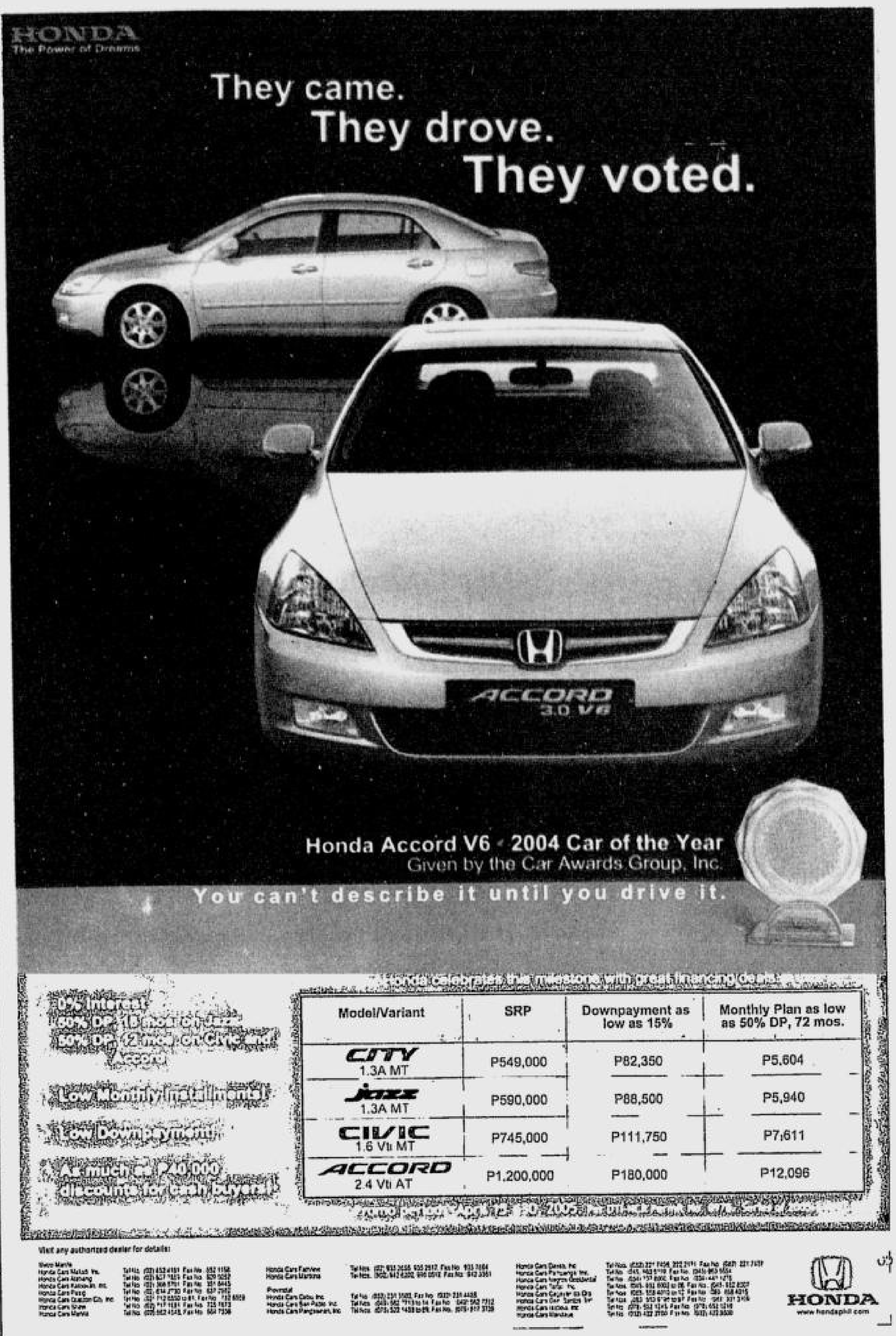

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Strike disrupts RP transport

From page A1

Franchising and Regulatory Board to act on the pending petition immediately. "Within 15 days, there should be a decision on their request for a fare hike," he said.

Jeepney groups are asking for a P2.50 fare increase for the first 4 km and 25 centavos for every additional kilometer. Operators of ordinary buses in Metro Manila want a P3-hike in the fare for the first 5 km and 60 centavos for each additional km.

If the government accepts their petition, the transport groups said they would no longer ask for a P1 provisional increase.

The strike was largely peaceful, with few or little casualties, police said.

The transport strike prompted the government to finally get to the bottom of the continuing surge in domestic oil prices.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla had asked the three big oil companies in the country to explain the "basis" or "reasonability" of the oil price increases they were imposing.

"While the price of oil had been increasing in the world market, these three oil companies should justify the actual rate of their increases," Bunye said in a phone patch interview with reporters in Malacañang.

Asked to give the Department of Energy an explanation were Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Caltex Philippines Inc. and Petron Corp.

Last week, gasoline prices increased by P3.10 per liter or six times since the start of the year. Diesel prices increased by P3.30 per liter or seven times since the start of the year.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, who was in Camarines Norte, said that one of the measures being worked out by the government to mitigate the impact of the oil price hikes was the continuing research for alternative sources of fuel, such as ethanol diesel and coco diesel.

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DRIVERS man a "chokepoint" along San Pedro Street in Davao City as they join the nationwide transport strike.

BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

She said that Brazil and Thailand were already using a blend of ethanol—sugar alcohol—in their gasoline.

The President disclosed that in June she will be inaugurating a gasoline station in Batangas that would sell compressed natural gas (CNG).

Initially, 200 buses servicing Southern Tagalog would make use of CNG, she said.

No jeepneys in Laguna

In Laguna, all jeepneys in the fourth district stopped operations. But buses continued plying routes. Public transport operations totally stopped from Sta. Rosa, Laguna, to Muntinlupa City; from Muntinlupa to Pacita Complex, and from Calamba City to San Pedro, Laguna.

Over 30 major federations of jeepney and tricycle drivers and operators within the Calabarzon region joined the nationally coordinated transport strike and crippled 95 percent of public transport operations in the region, a regional transport group said.

Headed by the Southern Tagalog Region Transport Sector Organization (Starter), the ralliers manned main towns and cities even as they put up their "strike stations" in front of key terminals in the region.

Jeepney units plying the Calamba-Canlubang route, led by the Mayapa-Calamba Jeepney Drivers Association Inc., also joined the strike.

As of 1 p.m. yesterday, Starter said they were able to paralyze 100 percent jeepney routes in the 25 towns and two cities in the second, third and fourth districts of Laguna, while jeepney operations in the three towns of the first district were paralyzed by 90 percent.

Tricycles join in

Over 30 organizations of tricycle and jeepney operators and drivers joined the strike, which represented about 25,000 people.

In Cavite, the strike crippled 50 to 90 percent of public transportation.

In Rizal, jeepneys in Antipolo City and Angono stopped plying their routes.

In Quezon, all buses except one bus company stopped operations. All jeepneys in Lucena City joined the strike.

In Batangas, jeepneys plying the Tanauan-Calamba City and Balayan-Lemery routes stopped operations. Only 5 percent in Lipa City and 10 percent in Sto. Tomas continued operations.

Pampanga crippled

In Pampanga, chapters of the Pinagkaisang Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston) reported crippling 80 percent of transport services in seven Central Luzon provinces.

But police said the strike, the fourth this year in the region, was "not successful."

Piston Central Luzon spokesperson Waldy Santos said transport services were crippled by 95 percent in Pampanga; 98 percent in Bulacan; 90 percent in Tarlac; 70 percent in Bataan, Zambales and Aurora, and 75 percent in Nueva Ecija.

"It (strike) manifested the disgust of drivers and operators against the frequent oil price increases and the cartel behind it," Santos told the INQUIRER.

Senior Supt. Policarpio Segubre, Angeles city police chief, said 95 percent of the public transport system in Angeles City was affected, forcing many establishments to close shop for the day.

The City of San Fernando, the business capital and regional government center of Central Luzon, was not affected as all transport groups there did not join the striking drivers.

Nueva Ecija normal

In Nueva Ecija, the police said only jeeps belonging to the Transport Service Cooperative joined the strike but transport services were "normal."

In Bulacan, 70 percent of transport organizations did not join the strike, according to Supt. Benaventura Viray Jr., provincial police operations chief.

It was only in San Jose del Monte City and Meycauyan where transport services were paralyzed.

In Tarlac, 30 percent of drivers participated.

In Pangasinan, minibuses and jeepneys plying the eastern and central parts of the province joined the strike, but they failed to paralyze transport services.

In Baguio City, Piston-Metro Baguio members did not ply their routes for three hours and joined other drivers in a march-rally on Session Road.

Mandaue City paralyzed

In the Visayas, the strike crippled 40 percent of public transportation in Iloilo and 90 in Negros Occidental. In Bacolod City, 60 percent joined the strike.

But the strike had little effect in the cities of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan and the province of Misamis Oriental, the police said.

Public transport was paralyzed 70 percent in Mandaue City and affected some major routes in Cebu City.

In Iloilo, only 10 percent of public transportation in the city was affected because not all members of the Iloilo City Alliance of Drivers' Association (Icada) joined the strike.

No PUVs in Davao

Drivers and operators of public utility vehicles in Davao City yesterday stopped plying their routes. Leaders of the protesters claimed a 98-percent paralysis in public transportation, prompting business establishments to call off work and the city government to declare a half-day workday.

It was the same scenario in the nearby cities of Tagum and Panabo in Davao del Norte and Mati in Davao Oriental.

In Cotabato City, *trisikad* (pedal-powered pedicabs) and motorcycles-for-hire became "kings of the road" as the operations of some 600 public utility vehicles and vans came to a halt at around 7:30 a.m. yesterday.

But in Malaybalay City, public and private utility vehicles continued to ply their routes. Protesters, however, held a rally at Plaza Rizal to show their support for the transport strike.

Protesters in General Santos City failed to cripple transportation. It was business as usual for the city as only 30 percent of the public utility vehicles stopped plying their routes. *With reports from Tonette Orejas, Jun Malig, and Greg Refraccion, PDI Central Luzon Desk; Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Eric Montoya, Nemesio de la Cruz and Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; Marlon Ramos, Bobby Q. Labalan, Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Juan Escandor and Job Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Nestor P. Burgos Jr., Raj Padilla, Carla P. Gomez, Jhunnex Napallacan and Jolene R. Bulambot, PDI Visayas Bureau; Germelina Lacorte, Anthony S. Allada, Charlie S. Señase, Edwin O. Fernandez, Grace Cantal-Albasin and Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Metro protest largely peaceful; 3 leaders held

From page A1

of the routes, according to Western Police District Director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong.

Less than 50 percent of public transport in Muntinlupa was affected, said Col. Roberto Rongavilla, in charge of peace and order in that city.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando downplayed the effects of the strike, claiming it only affected 10 percent of public transport.

New kings of the roads

Hundreds of tricycle drivers ruled the roads in some areas, taking advantage of the situation by jacking up their own fares.

The strike, launched by several jeepney groups also to back up demands for fare hikes, stranded thousands of commuters.

The groups were the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines (Fedjodap), the Philippine Confederation of Drivers and Operators-Alliance of Concerned Transport Organizations (PCDO-Acto) and the Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Opereytor Nationwide (Piston).

Also involved were the Alliance of Transport Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines and the National Transport Union.

Over the weekend and also yesterday, oil firms again raised the prices of their gasoline, diesel and kerosene by 75 centavos a liter and of their cooking gas by 75 centavos a kilogram.

DOE wants explanation

The Department of Energy asked them to justify the increases.

The increases, implemented at different times from Saturday to Monday, were announced by Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Caltex Philippines Inc. and Total (Philippines) Corp., as well as new players Eastern Petroleum Corp., Flying V, Seaoil Petroleum Corp. and Unioil Petroleum Philippines Inc.

Shell, Caltex and Total also jacked up the prices of liquefied petroleum gas by 75 centavos a liter. They cited the still high prices of crude and finished products as well as of LPG in the regional and world markets as the reason for raising prices anew.

But Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said world prices, while still high, were already lower than prices in the last two to three weeks as prices had started to ease.

He said the oil firms should "explain under oath" why the increases were not unreasonable.

Under oath

In a letter to them, Lotilla said: "Memorandum Circular No. 2001-05-002 states that oil companies are required to file a notice with the department at least one day prior to its effectivity. You are hereby directed to explain in writing under oath your compliance with the memorandum circular.

"While world oil prices are still high, the upward trend seen early this month has eased since April 4," he said. "The public wants to know why our domestic prices have increased. Oil companies should explain this."

Since the start of the year, gasoline prices have gone up seven times by a total of P3.85 a liter, while prices of diesel fuel have increased eight times by a total of P4.05 a liter.

LPG prices have risen thrice by a total of P2.15 per kg.

No disruption

Fernando said only a few areas were affected by the transport stoppage.

"All in all, the effect was not so much felt, because offices, malls and other commercial establishments were still open," Fernando said.

"What we look at is whether the strike disrupts economic activity, but in this case, it [transport holiday] did not disrupt anything. I think they weren't able to paralyze the system," he said.

Fernando said those affected included major intersections, particularly in the Cubao and Muñoz areas in Quezon City, Blumentritt and Divisoria in Manila, and the Bonifacio-Monumento Circle in Caloocan.

Number coding suspended

The MMDA lifted the Unified Vehicle Volume Reduction Program, or number coding system, several hours after the strike began to fill up the lack of jeepneys in some areas.

"There were many requests from callers in radio stations for us to suspend the number coding," said De Dios.

As of yesterday afternoon, the MMDA Metrobase traffic monitoring center noted a lack of jeepneys in routes such as the Navotas-to-Monumento and Malabon-to-Monumento, Pasig-to-Marikina traversing Shaw Boulevard, Camp Crame-to-San Juan, and those going into the University of the Philippines campus in Diliman, Quezon City coming from Katipunan Avenue and Philcoa.

The MMDA, which had readied more than 100 vehicles to assist stranded passengers, fielded its units in Divisoria, the UP area and J.P. Rizal Street in Makati.

Metrobase also received reports of stranded passengers in other areas.

In Manila, the city government and police fielded more than 100 trucks and 30 multicabs for affected commuters.

Strikers claim success

Piston chapter president Emeterio Santos claimed the strike was a success. "We were able to paralyze the Camanava area," he said.

Thousands of commuters from Caloocan City, Malabon, Navotas and Valenzuela were stranded despite the deployment of government vehicles giving free rides to commuters.

Tricycles, prohibited from cruising along major thoroughfares, freely roamed the streets in the Camanava area at the height of the strike.

"We can't apprehend them today and they are raking it in," a traffic enforcer said.

Commuters had no choice but to pay whatever amounts the tricycle drivers were demanding, he said.

Not all were angry

"Drivers charged a minimum of P20 each passenger from the usual P5.50," said Marivic Mendoza.

But not all were angry. Nita Beltran rode a tricycle from Blumentritt to Monumento.

"Thank God for the tricycles. Otherwise, I can't go to my sister's house in Sangandaan," she said.

Tricycle drivers were glad at the chance to earn extra money.

"We don't mind if they do this daily, we are happy," said Rene Reyes, who plies the Caloocan City Hall-10th Avenue route.

On the heels of the strike, Bayan Muna Rep. Teddy Casiño accused the country's Big 3 oil companies of overpricing their pump prices by as much as P1.16 per liter.

"This is obscene, and dramatically shows that the oil deregulation law should be scrapped," said Casiño. He charged that Caltex, Petron and Pilipinas Shell were operating as a "cartel." *With reports from Margaux C. Ortiz, Nancy Carvajal, Fran Katigbak, Jean Marionne Bermudez, Michael Lim Ubac and Luige del Puerto*

Muslims with illegal firearms offered pilgrimage to Mecca

From page A1

der unregistered firearms in exchange for a trip to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, during the yearly hajj, Ikbala said.

According to the Philippine National Police-Firearms and Explosives Division, there are about 150,000 loose firearms in the country and a third of that number could be found in the predominantly Muslim region.

Over the years, tribes in Southern Philippines had exchanged their bladed weapons for guns. With the proposed program, they could trade their firearms for the cost of the trip to Mecca—usually by boat.

"It also depends on the firearm," Ikbala said. "If it's not enough [to pay for the trip], they just have to add a little."

And since it would be a boat trip, Filipino pilgrims could bring goods to sell during the hajj and bring back Arabian products they could, in turn, sell here.

The proposal has many advantages, according to Ikbala.

"You keep the peace because there would be fewer firearms, you help develop entrepreneurship and you help Muslims become better Muslims," he said.

And although the ARMM is perceived as the country's "Wild, Wild West," Ikbala said the region is relatively peaceful.

Crime incidence there is one of the lowest in the country, he said. During the first quarter, only three crimes were reported for every 100,000 population per month in the ARMM.

"We have problems when there is a *rido* (violent feuds between families), but other than that, our crime rate is low," Ikbala said.

But he described the peace and order situation as "fragile" because of the presence of the Abu Sayyaf and rebel groups in the region.

Ikbala added that some politicians in the region had police or security details, but they shouldn't have private armies.

Disband private armies

Anak-Mindanao Party List Rep. Mujiv Hataman urged law enforcement agencies to "seriously implement" President Macapagal-Arroyo's order to stop the proliferation of unregistered firearms and dismantle private armed groups long blamed for the country's worsening peace and order situation.

Hataman hinted that provinces in Mindanao which had been turned into the bailiwicks of powerful political warlords should not be exempted from the directive.

Ms Arroyo issued the order to Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao after the assassination of former Pasig Rep. Henry Lanot.

Hataman said that unless implemented, the President's latest order would add to the current administration's many unfinished programs "because of the lack of political will."

It was Hataman who filed last year House Resolution No. 232 seeking an investigation into the continued existence of private armies of local politicians.

Expired licenses

The PNP will go after loose firearms and guns with expired licenses with renewed vigor.

The number of firearms with expired licenses ballooned to more than 415,000, or almost half of the country's 915,000 registered guns this year, police said yesterday.

Officials said gun owners should renew their licenses next month because legal action could start in June.

To make license renewal easier, Senior Supt. Arturo Cacdac, chief of the PNP-FED, said a gun owner should submit an application form to a provincial or regional police, which, in turn, would send the forms for processing to PNP headquarters in Quezon City.

Lomibao clarified that the government's amnesty program, which expires on Sept. 30, 2005, did not cover registered firearms holders.

He said the PNP would be taking a "hard stance on gun control to eliminate the tools used by gun-for-hire syndicates, private armed groups, organized crime groups and domestic terrorists to murder, intimidate and oppress their victims."

To date, some 800 registered guns have been reported lost or missing, according to the PNP-FED.

Room of Tears ...

From page A1

and the faithful about tendencies that he considered dangers to the faith: sects, ideologies like Marxism, liberalism, atheism, agnosticism and relativism.

"Having a clear faith, based on the creed of the Church, is often labeled today as a fundamentalism," he said. "Whereas relativism, which is letting oneself be tossed and 'swept along by every wind of teaching,' looks like the only attitude acceptable to today's standards."

Blunt reminder

"We are moving toward a dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one's own ego and one's own desires," he said.

It was a blunt reminder to the 114 other cardinals that there were absolute truths in the Church, and that they should choose a man who would protect them.

Beneath a brilliant sky, thousands of pilgrims converged on St. Peter's Square to follow the Mass on giant screens.

Many gazed up at the chimney on the slanted roof of the chapel, where white smoke will eventually signal to the world that a successor to the late Pope John Paul II had been elected.

The cardinals were to vote in a series of secret ballots under the awesome splendor of Michelangelo's fresco, the Last Judgment, showing the imposing figure of Christ drawing up the chosen few ascending to heaven and compelling the wretched sinners down toward the judge of the underworld.

Remember the Last Judgment

The symbolism will not be lost on the cardinals, who have repeatedly been reminded that they must allow the Holy Spirit to guide their choice and not be led by selfish or other impure motives.

Cloth-draped tables had been arrayed along the walls graced with frescoes depicting scenes from the lives of Moses and Christ.

The cardinal-electors were to draw lots to determine where they would sit as they deliberate over who would next lead the world's 1.1 billion Roman Catholics.

In theory, the 115 voting cardinals are all candidates. But tradition and human nature together create a rough winnowing process.

The first vote—which could occur as early as Monday night (early Tuesday in Manila)—was likely to be showdown time.

Early favorites

"After the first scrutiny, you see the way things are going," conclave historian Ambrogio M. Piazzoni said. "Slowly, slowly, you arrive at a majority."

Opening favorites often do not pick up enough steam; compromise candidates emerge, and power-broker cardinals shift their support. Cardinals decide during meals or after-dinner strolls, and convey their preferences in quiet chats.

If the conclaves of the last century are any guide, a pope should be elected by week's end.

The longest conclave took 14 ballots, lasted five days and produced Pope Pius XI in 1922. The shortest—a day—elected Pius XII in 1939 and John Paul I in 1978. *(See related story on this page.)*

The grandeur that accompanied the opening of a conclave obscured political maneuverings.

Chapel swept for bugs

The day began with a morning Mass. In the afternoon (10:30 p.m., Manila time) the cardinals were to proceed to the Sistine Chapel, which had been swept for bugs.

The cardinals were to swear an oath, vowing to serve faithfully as pope if elected and keep the proceedings secret.

The balloting is highly ritualized, involving folded paper ballots and a walk to the altar to deposit them in an urn.

Two scrutinizers, chosen by lot, record the votes. A third reads the names aloud.

After Monday, each day until the pope is selected two rounds of voting will take place in the morning and two in the afternoon.

Any notes the cardinals keep must be burned.

Bells will peal

The ballots, too, will be burned, producing the smoke that emerges from the chimney. A second stove has been added this time for smoke canisters to reinforce the signal.

To avoid any embarrassing confusion over the color of the smoke, the bells of St. Peter's will peal when white smoke rises, signifying a pope has been elected.

Black smoke means no pope has been chosen.

If no cardinal wins a two-thirds majority, 77 votes, after the third day, the cardinals will pause for a day for prayer and discussion.

Voting resumes for seven ballots, followed by another pause; then seven more and another pause; then seven more.

If there is still no pope, the cardinals may resort to a simple majority, or 58. Such a turn would come around May 1.

2 pope makers

The cardinals spent Sunday night in the purpose-built, hotel-like Santa Marta residence inside the Vatican where they were to eat, rest and confer between votes.

Vatican watchers believe that after more than a week of meetings, cardinals are split over who should be pope, with two main camps emerging—one led by Ratzinger and the other by the Italian Carlo Maria Martini.

While neither is likely to obtain the two-thirds majority to win, they may be highly influential pope makers. ***Reports from The New York Times News Service, AFP, AP***

Firsts, lasts, highs, lows in papal history

NEW YORK—The pope who will be elected in the conclave that started Monday inherits an office of incredible mystique and lore. The Associated Press looked into some of the highlights and low points from nearly 20 centuries of papal history and came up with this list. Among the sources for the research was "Lives of the Popes" (HarperSanFrancisco) by the Rev. Richard P. McBrien:

First pope: The Apostle Peter.

Longest reigning pope: Peter, according to Roman Catholic tradition, though there are no agreed dates for his reign. He also was the first martyred pope.

Second-longest reign: Pius IX (1846-78), nearly 32 years. John Paul II (1978-2005) ranks third.

Shortest reign: Urban VII, 12 days (1590). He caught malaria during the election and was never crowned. John Paul I's tenure lasted just 33 days in 1978, but his was not even among the 10 shortest reigns.

First (and last) pope to directly succeed his father: Innocent I, son of Anastasius I (401). Thirteen years after Pope Hormisdas died, his son became Pope Silverius (536). John XI was allegedly the first and last illegitimate son of a pope (Sergius III) elected pope himself (931).

First (and last) pope said to direct his predecessor's murder: Sergius III (904 or 905).

First pope murdered in office: No pope was called upon to die for the faith after the Church's first centuries, but the highly political John VIII was poisoned and clubbed to death (882). He was the first of perhaps eight popes to be slain in office.

First pope to resign: Pontianus (in 235), after he was imprisoned during Rome's persecution of Christians.

Last pope to resign: Gregory XII, in the deal ending the Great Western Schism among competing papal claimants (1415).

First pope to assume a papal name: John II (533), because he was named after the pagan god Mercury. The last pope who kept his name was Marcellus II (1555).

First (and last) pope elected despite having been suspended by a previous pope: Boniface VI (896). He was actually suspended twice—for immorality.

First (and last) teenage pope: The dissolute John XII, elected at 18 (955).

First layman elected pope: Leo VIII (963). He had to be consecrated a bishop to actually take over the office.

First (and last) hermit to be named pope: Celestine V, in 1294. Uneducated and incompetent, he soon resigned.

Last pope elected who wasn't a cardinal: Urban VI (1378). His misrule provoked the Great Western Schism.

Last pope elected who wasn't a bishop when the conclave began: The monk Gregory XVI (1831).

Last pope coronated with a crown: Paul VI (1963). John Paul I (1978) abandoned the practice.

Last non-Italian pope prior to Poland's John Paul II: Hadrian VI of the Netherlands (1522), who was absent at the conclave. There also have been 16 French, 13 Greek, six Syrian and three African popes. Others have been Alsatian, Bavarian, Dalmatian, English, Portuguese, Saxon, Spanish, Swabian, Thracian and Jewish (Peter).

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BIR insists on church tax: The law is the law

From page A1

Told that some religious groups were against the payment of taxes because profits from their commercial activities fund church activities, Parayno replied: "Well, they can say that, but the law is the law. There is no quarrel about it."

While claiming that he had been misquoted in an interview last week, Parayno went on to admit on dzMM radio that the BIR was "undertaking audits" of the Catholic Church and other religious organizations so that it could impose taxes on their purely commercial activities.

Sen. Joker Arroyo warned the administration that it risked facing a backlash if it failed to justify its plan to tax the commercial operations of the Church.

Eddie Villanueva of the Jesus is Lord Movement, for his part, urged the BIR, which is implementing the Run After Tax Evaders (RATE) program, to go after religious leaders who enrich themselves by using their ties to the government.

"We must vigorously implement the [tax laws] against religious groups that use religious influence to bag multimillion, multibillion-peso contracts from the government at the expense of Juan de la Cruz," Villanueva said on dzBB. He, however, did not name any religious groups that had bagged government contracts.

Parayno has yet to respond to Villanueva's challenge.

In the House of Representatives, Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo said it was government inefficiency in revenue collection, and not church taxation, that was the problem.

"Why make a mountain out of a mole hill and blow a perceived controversy out of proportion when at the heart of the problem lies the government's glaringly inefficient tax collection that causes leakage," Ocampo said.

Other lawmakers came to the defense of the Church.

Sin tax

Palawan Rep. Abraham Mitra said churches already pay taxes although they enjoy some exemptions.

"For Catholic priests, the wine they use in Mass is subject, ironically, to a sin tax," Mitra said.

"There is even a tax on flour used to make the *hostia* (host) used in communion. There is also a tax on the electricity used to play organ music," he said.

Catholics believe that the wine and host become the body and blood of Jesus Christ after the consecration during the Mass.

Parayno said that although the Church acknowledged that it could not be totally exempt from paying taxes, some Church leaders had to be reminded to pay up from time to time.

"The leadership of the Church recognizes (the need to pay taxes on purely commercial activities) and they are abiding by it by and large, except for a few who have to be reminded every now and then (to pay up) if we see they have some (business) activities not reflected in their income," he said in another interview aired over dzBB.

Level playing field

The BIR chief said taxing commercial activities of the Church was necessary to stop what could amount to unfair competition between Church-related businesses and non-Church enterprises.

"What's more important is to level the playing field. If the Church gets into [business] activities where there are businesses paying taxes, how will business establishments win when they have to pay taxes and the Church does not pay anything," he said.

Only "exclusive" religious activities are recognized in the Constitution as tax-free, according to Parayno.

Under the Internal Revenue Code, "a non-stock corporation or association organized, operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific or cultural purposes" is tax-exempt because none of its members are expected to benefit from its commercial activities, the BIR chief said.

"If they rent [out their lands or buildings] to a boutique, a restaurant or a canteen, they are no longer exclusive for religious purposes. Then you must pay for it," he said.

He added: "If you rent out your property, like put up [a Shoemart mall], it's no longer religious. You must pay tax for the rental."

He said canteens operated by schools were no longer related to education or religious activity and must pay taxes.

"In the course of verification, the BIR reminds those who forgot to settle their taxes, about their liability. We issue an assessment and most of them ask for deductions from penalties or interests," Parayno said.

Other taxes

Mitra cautioned the BIR against taxing the "nonreligious" activities of the Church, saying this might provoke a Church-state rift.

"Though thou shalt not tax rosaries ... (the BIR should) hold its horses and first conduct an inventory of Church groups, which are paying taxes on their noncore activities," Mitra said.

Mitra said it was a "superstition to say that religious people are exempted from all taxes."

"Whether they're Muslim, Catholic or Protestant, they pay a VAT on a car or chicken barbecue," he said.

"The interest on their bank deposits are subject to a 20-percent withholding tax," he added.

Go slow

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles urged the BIR to "go slow" on its plan to go after the religious groups not paying the correct taxes.

Nograles said the BIR plan had caused undue alarm within the religious community, "which has been actually paying taxes over the years."

He said churches had been paying taxes on their properties not exclusively used for religious purposes.

Nograles said Parayno's statement that he would next target the churches had given the wrong perception that they had not been paying taxes.

"Why should the BIR single them out as if they don't pay taxes?" he said.

Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano said the BIR's move to tax the commercial operations of the Church would turn it into a "salvation army" for the cash-strapped administration.

"It is squeezing the neck of everyone to satisfy its creditors without lifting a finger to at least alleviate the burden of the Filipino people, including the Church, from runaway prices," Mariano said.

He said the government was desperately "fishing in all sectors in order to fill the pot for onerous debt payments, bureaucratic corruption and military spending."

Mariano said the BIR should instead run after suspected tax cheats.

11% VAT rate seen as 'win-win formula'

From page A1

Speaker Jose de Venecia inadvertently disclosed this "win-win" formula when he said yesterday that the Senate and House panels in the bicameral conference committee reconciling the differences in the Senate and House versions of the VAT bill were "nearing a creative compromise."

The bicameral conference committee formally started deliberations yesterday.

An optimistic De Venecia expects President Macapagal-Arroyo to sign the VAT bill into law by April 30.

"We are moving toward a creative compromise on the VAT legislation that would yield the maximum revenue for the government and the maximum safety nets for our people," he said.

His statement jibed with pronouncements earlier made by bicameral committee members that the final form of the tax measure could be sent back to both chambers for ratification in two weeks.

But it was De Venecia who initially broached the idea of a one-percentage increase in VAT to end the impasse over the House of Representatives' 12-percent rate and the Senate's 10 percent.

Strategic retreat

A member of the House panel confirmed that this strategic retreat was the only possible option both panels were exploring.

"That is at the back of the minds of many (bicameral commitee members) but remains unspoken," said Rep. Joey Salceda, chair of the House economic affairs committee and one of President Arroyo's trusted economic advisers.

Salceda said pegging the VAT rate at 11 percent, the revenue loss resulting from the one-percent reduction would be easily offset by the proposed three-percentage point increase in the corporate income tax.

The Senate version includes a provision increasing the corporate income tax rate from 32 percent to 35 percent.

Middle ground

Sen. Manuel Villar, chair of the Senate finance committee and a member of the Senate bicameral panel, earlier told the INQUIRER that the bicameral panel might literally meet halfway to end any stalemate on the controversial measure.

"Anything is possible now," said Villar. "We need to explore all options in finding a middle ground."

Villar, a member of the Senate Wednesday Club which has been against any increase in the VAT rate, said an 11 percent VAT was a "pragmatic option."

But he said the Senate panel headed by Sen. Ralph Recto, chair of the ways and means committee, would stand by the upper chamber's decision to lift the VAT exemption of the energy sector and impose the no pass-through provision of VAT on the sales of electricity by generation, transmission and distribution companies.

Single rate

Recto yesterday pushed for a single rate for VAT even as he said the exact rate would be tackled toward the end of the bicameral conference.

At the bicameral conference, the Department of Finance came up with an estimate of how much in revenues each version of the VAT reform measure would generate.

The DOF said the House version, which seeks a 12-percent VAT rate and a multi-tier rate for power, petroleum and some goods, could raise P87.782 billion. The Senate version, which calls for the lifting of exemptions, the retention of the 10-percent VAT rate and the increase in corporate income tax, could yield P79.482 billion.

But Recto said he was contesting the revenue impact of the House version because he did not believe that the two-percentage point increase in VAT could raise P50 billion as estimated by the DOF.

"Let's not fool ourselves. That's [only] P28 billion at best," Recto said.

He said that with P28 billion to be collected by increasing the rate from 10 to 12 percent, the House version would yield only P65 billion.

House doubts Senate figures

Rep. Jesli Lapus, Recto's House counterpart, said the figures did not come from the House but from the DOF.

"This is what we have to discuss. We may not agree on the exact numbers but we have to agree on certain parameters. I do not want to prejudge the numbers," Lapus said.

"I do not want us to be bogged down on that as long as we understand what are the assumptions," Lapus said.

Lapus said the House also doubted some of the Senate figures, including the estimate on power and the spread of the input tax on capital goods.

Recto said he would push for a consensus yesterday to adopt a single VAT rate instead of the multi-tier contained in the House version.

"The 10 to 12 (percent rate) will probably be part of the last but I'm hoping that today we could agree that conceptually a single rate is better whether that rate is 10, 11 or 12 percent," Recto said.

During the bicam, Recto asked: "Assuming we adopt a single rate of 12 percent, is the House willing to reduce petroleum excise tax rates to cushion the effect of higher pump prices [of oil]?"

Noodles

The Senate version seeks to remove the 60-centavo per liter excise tax on diesel, LPG, kerosene and bunker fuel and reduces the excise tax on regular and premium gasoline to P4.35 per liter, from P4.80 and P5.35, respectively.

The House version seeks to lift the exemptions of the power and petroleum sectors but proposes a 4-percent VAT rate in the first year of implementation, and 6 percent, 8 percent and 12 percent in the second, third and fourth years, respectively.

It also proposes a 6-percent VAT on locally manufactured goods such as mackerel, sardines, refined sugar, cooking oil, packed instant noodles, *miki, misua, sotanghon, pancit* canton, *pancit bihon* and generic medicine.

A single rate is easier to administer because there are 140,000 VAT-registered persons in the country, according to Recto.

"It's easier for the taxpayer and for the tax administrator to collect a single rate rather than have 4, 6 and 12 percent, for example. In effect we are collecting it from the big boys—the power companies. Who pays the VAT? It's the one selling the goods or service," Recto said.

Recto and Lapus said the bicameral conference could be finished in no more than two weeks.

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NOTICE/INVITATION TO SUBMIT PROPOSALS

Notice is hereby given that the Province of Cebu, through its Economic Enterprise Council (EEC), is intending to develop one of its properties for commercial use on a Build Transfer Operate (BTO) scheme, more particularly described as follows:

> Lot No. 3-A-2 and a portion of Lot No. 3-A-1-B, containing a total area of 27,351 square meters, more or less, located in Banilad, Cebu City, previously occupied by the Cebu International School and Cebu Tennis Club.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

a. Rental rate of at least P35.00/sq.m. per month with an escalation rate of 5% per year, applicable on the sixth year of lease and every year thereafter;

b. Sales percentage share of ½ of 1% of gross sales or P200,000.00, whichever is higher, paid monthly to the Province of Cebu;

c. Investment cost for site development and structure construction not less than P250M, with building and site development plan subject to approval by the Economic Enterprise Council. Built up facility to be turned over upon completion to the Province of Cebu and to be fully insured with the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) in accordance with the appraisal of GSIS, in favor of Cebu Province. Premium shall be paid by the proponent;

d. Operation of facility and use of the property shall be for a maximum of twenty-five (25) years.

In relation thereto, any and all interested parties are hereby INVITED to submit their LETTERS OF INTENT and other required documents, which shall be the basis for the evaluation of qualified bidders, on or before May 10, 2005 to the EEC Secretariat, Office of the Provincial Planning and Development Coordinator, 3rd Floor, Cebu Capitol, Cebu City. Notice of Bidding shall be issued to qualified proponents.

For ready reference and guidance, copies of the titles, technical descriptions and sketch plan of the said lot are available, for a fee of P5,000.00 at the EEC Secretariat.

(Sgd.) GWENDOLYN F. GARCIA
Cebu Provincial Governor

(PDI – April 19, 25 & May 2, 2005)

Filipino worker killed in Baghdad

From page A1

Citing recent events, Romulo said "the threat to the safety and the lives of Filipino workers in Iraq has become even greater. The threat is real."

He appealed to the Filipinos who may have difficulty in getting repatriated to immediately call the embassy for assistance.

The embassy is still investigating the circumstances behind Torres' death, DFA spokesperson Gilbert Asuque said.

Torres, who was employed by Qatar International Trading Co. (QIT), was killed in a shooting incident in downtown Baghdad Sunday night (early Monday morning in Manila), the department said.

According to Endaya, Torres' presence in the area was contrary to the security advisory given by the Philippine government to overseas Filipino workers in Iraq to remain at their workplaces, such as military bases, which are deemed more secure.

Endaya is also coordinating with Torres' employer for the transfer of his remains to Kuwait on its way back to the Philippines.

The official also visited Camp Victory, where Torres was believed to have worked, to get more details of his death and to arrange for payment of his benefits.

Heavy gunfire

A day after the killing, five OFWs survived heavy gunfire from unidentified men on their way to the Baghdad International Airport in what was believed to be an abduction attempt.

Two of the workers, Francisco Luz and Sherylyn Fontanilla, suffered slight injuries. Their companions—Imelda Talibao, Ginalyn Mejia and Cherilyn Valdez—escaped unharmed.

Illegally deployed to Iraq, they had finally decided to abandon their contracts with a Jordan-based company, Dawood & Partners, for voluntary repatriation back to the Philippines, the DFA said.

They were scheduled to arrive at 10:35 last night at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila on a Gulf Air flight from Bahrain.

The embassy in Baghdad had recommended to the DFA that it endorse the suspension of the company that illegally deployed the Filipinos to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, the department said in a statement.

Dawood & Partners provides catering services to US military facilities in Iraq.

The Filipino workers told Endaya that they were given a two-year employment contract by the company last year for jobs in the Jordanian capital of Amman. But upon their arrival, they were brought to the US military bases in Al-Assad and Taji in Iraq where they worked for a year.

They decided not to complete their contracts because of sporadic mortar attacks on the facilities, the DFA statement said.

UN peacekeeper's family to get P2.7M

By Nikko Dizon

IT WILL never compensate for the loss of a husband and father, but the amount the United Nations (UN) is extending to the widow of a slain Filipino peacekeeper and their three young sons could hopefully provide them a secure future.

The Philippine Mission to the UN in New York City said yesterday that the family of Army Staff Sgt. Antonio Batomalaque, the peacekeeper killed last week in Haiti, will receive an estimated P2.7 million in death benefits.

The UN awards $50,000 to the families of peacekeepers who die in the line of duty.

Ambassador Lauro Baja, Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN, said in a statement that the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations had informed the Philippine mission that Merly Batomalaque is the beneficiary of the monetary benefits.

Baja said the Philippine mission is facilitating the release of the money.

The UN will release the amount to the Philippine Mission, which will forward it to Merly and her sons through the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila.

Merly, who works for the Social Security System, had told the INQUIRER that their family faces an uncertain future with the sudden death of her husband.

Batomalaque, 40, was shot dead on March 14 when gunmen attacked UN peacekeepers who were conducting security operations against Haitian gang members terrorizing residents of a seaside slum community in Port-au-Prince.

The Filipino soldier's alleged assailant was reportedly killed the following day in a clash between gang members and UN forces.

Batomalaque was killed when a Security Council mission that included Baja arrived for a three-day visit in Haiti to assess the situation in the troubled Caribbean state.

Baja, who has returned to New York, said the Philippine contingent in Haiti under Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero is preparing to send Batomalaque's body back to the Philippines before the end of this week.

Batomalaque was the third peacekeeper to be killed since the UN deployed a peacekeeping force in Haiti last year.

He was the 11th Filipino peacekeeper to die while serving in a UN peacekeeping force, but he is believed to be the first to be killed by hostile fire.

IBP under fire over high court fees

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE INTEGRATED Bar of the Philippines (IBP) is under fire from its own members for withdrawing a petition questioning the increase in the compensation of members of the judiciary at the expense of litigants who must pay higher court fees.

In a paper titled "IBP, Irrelevant?" Senen Glinoga, president of the organization's Quezon province chapter, said the IBP "missed the golden opportunity to serve the public interest and rise above the three branches of government which [had] betrayed the Constitution."

The Quezon chapter and more than 30 others want the IBP to refile its petition in the Supreme Court questioning the constitutionality of Republic Act No. 9227.

Passed on Oct. 21, 2003, the law doubled the compensation of members of the entire judiciary through "special allowances," not salaries, sourced from increased docket fees, Glinoga said.

For instance, the Court of Tax Appeals initially jacked up its fees by as much as 1,000 percent but later settled for a 500-percent increase following protests, he said.

The IBP petition was seen as a "bold move" that took the side of litigants victimized by exorbitant fees, Glinoga said.

But since it withdrew the petition, Glinoga said the country's organization of lawyers "left a far-ranging constitutional issue unresolved which can trigger a wave of similarly questionable legislation."

RA 9227 set a "dangerous precedent" when it increased compensation through allowances, not through higher salaries sourced from taxes, he explained.

"What Congress did was a deviation from the constitutionally prescribed process of budgeting and appropriation," he said. "It substituted 'fees' for taxes, which amounted to an undue delegation of its taxing power (apparently to keep the pork barrel) and substituted 'allowances' for salaries."

With RA 9227, Glinoga wondered what would stop Congress from passing similarly "unconstitutional" laws increasing the salaries of, say, policemen and soldiers using so-called "fees."

"What is sad is that the Supreme Court may have lost the moral ascendancy and independence to decide a similar constitutional issue which may arise in future similar laws," he said.

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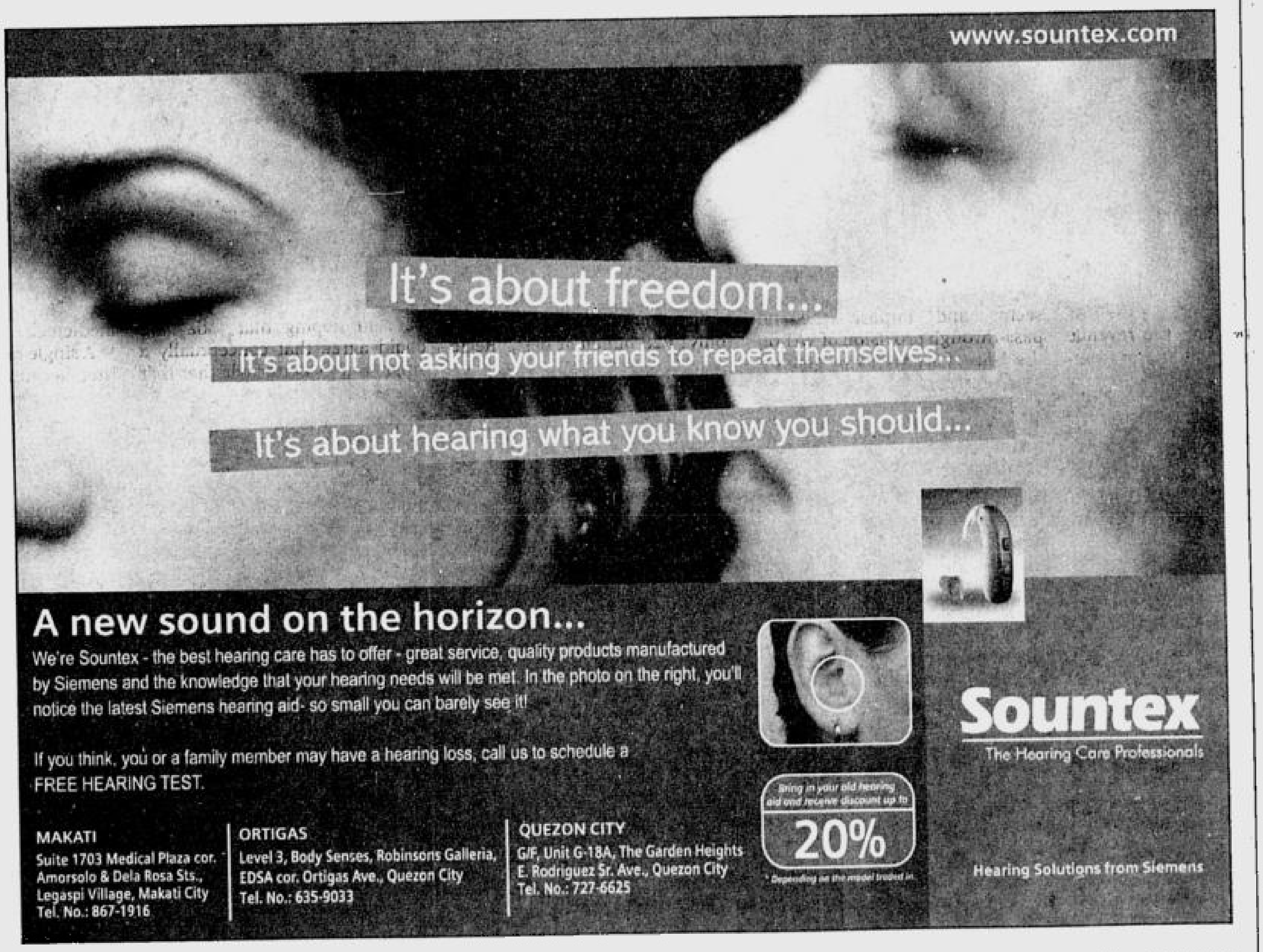
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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

AN IRAQI woman covers her ears as gunfire breaks out on the outskirts of Madain, Iraq, April 17. AP

Iraq hostage crisis seen as hoax

BAGHDAD—Iraqi forces searched a town near Baghdad on Monday for evidence of dozens of Shiites said to have been kidnapped by Sunni militants, amid suggestions the claim was exaggerated for political ends.

Five brigades of Iraqi troops from the Interior Ministry's special commando unit spread out through Madaen, 40 km southeast of Baghdad, but after hours of searching found no evidence of any hostages or gunmen.

"We found no hostages and we have arrested no terrorists," Col. Abu al-Jau, deputy commander of one of the brigades, told Reuters by phone from Madaen, adding not a single bullet had been fired.

"The people were very afraid but we have urged them to keep calm. They have been very cooperative," he said.

Shiite officials in Baghdad said on Saturday that up to 150 Shiites were being held hostage by Sunni gunmen in the town and were being threatened with death unless Shiites left.

Police cautioned from the start that perhaps only as few as three people were being held and said the situation was the result of weeks of tit-for-tat kidnapping between rival tribes.

The confusion has underlined just how tense Iraq's authorities have grown as a political vacuum, formed since the Jan. 30 election, deepens, with no government in sight.

Rival political factions are increasingly at odds over the distribution of ministries, with the main Shiite political party determined to secure the Interior Ministry and adamant that the Defense Ministry should not be controlled by Sunnis.

Some officials said the situation in Madaen was exaggerated for political gain, with groups trying to show via a hostage crisis that the interim government was incompetent, allowing Sunni militants to harass Shiites without recourse.

"The lack of a government is making everyone try to show that they know something and that they are influential," said Sabah Kadhim, an adviser to the interior minister.

"Madaen was just blown out of proportion. It's a mixed community with problems that are tribal matters. But you've got outside forces, some of them on the political side, who were exploiting the situation," he said.

Kidnapping has been common in towns such as Madaen, which has a mixed Sunni and Shiite population but where tribal loyalties often supersede religious affiliations. Tribes frequently respond to kidnappings with abductions of their own. *Reuters*

India-Pakistan dispute must end so scientists can work—Musharraf

NEW DELHI—President Pervez Musharraf Monday said India and Pakistan should end their dispute over a strategic Kashmir glacier, where cold has killed more soldiers than enemy fire, so scientists can carry out research.

"The sky is the limit. We can then carry out all research together of the (Siachen) glacier," the Pakistani leader told Indian newspaper editors at the end of a three-day visit to India.

Both sides, however, would have to be flexible, he said of their row over the glacier, which analysts say lost its strategic value after India and Pakistan both declared they had nuclear weapons in 1998.

"We need to correct maps on both sides. We need to understand that it is not that only Pakistan needs to correct its maps," he said.

In a joint statement issued before he left New Delhi for Manila, Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh pledged to find a solution to the festering dispute on Siachen and to re-start a process to remove ambiguities in maritime boundaries in the Sir Creek marshlands off India's western state of Gujarat.

"On the issues of Sir Creek and Siachen, they instructed that the existing institutional mechanisms should convene discussions immediately with a view to finding mutually acceptable solutions to both issues expeditiously," the statement said.

The dispute over the 6,363-meter Siachen glacier, which overlooks India, Pakistan and China, dates back to the first war between India and Pakistan in 1948, when a ceasefire line was drawn in Kashmir up until a reference point known as NJ 9842 near the Shyok river at the base of the Saltoro Mountain range.

However, the inhospitable area beyond NJ 9842 stretching up to the Chinese border, where temperatures plunge below minus 40 degrees Celsius in winter, was left undelineated. Both sides now claim it as their own.

Six rounds of talks between India and Pakistan since 1984 have failed to resolve the row, which erupted into a bloody clash in 1987 when the two armies fought on the icy wasteland to establish military supremacy.

The rival armies remain deployed eyeball to eyeball with India holding the vantage points on the glacier. Hostilities have decreased since both sides began a universal ceasefire in Kashmir in November 2003.

Up until then, one Pakistani soldier died every fourth day, while India lost one every second day, according to unofficial estimates by military commanders on both sides who have served on the glacier. Ninety-five percent of the casualties were due to the intolerable conditions, they say. *AFP*

PEOPLE on Sacramento Street watch smoke rise from fires after a severe earthquake in San Francisco, Calif. on April 18, 1906. AP

Great Quake survivors to gather for anniversary 99

SAN FRANCISCO—Herbert Hamrol has one enduring memory of the devastating 1906 earthquake that razed much of San Francisco—the feeling of his mother's arm.

"She carried me in her left arm and used her right hand to grab the stair rail," said the 102-year-old Hamrol, who was 3 when his family fled a shaking South of Market apartment that was eventually destroyed by fire. "That's all I remember."

Finding people who experienced the Great Quake of April 18, 1906 might seem like a formidable job. But organizers of Monday's 99th anniversary commemoration know of at least 60 remaining survivors and expect more to surface in time for next year's centennial.

"They are coming out of the woodwork," said Taren Sapienza, who for the last 29 years has arranged the annual observance that culminates with a dawn wreath-laying at Lotta's Fountain, a landmark that served as a meeting point for those trying to find families and friends after the disaster.

At least 15 survivors planned to attend a Sunday supper at Johns Grill, while about 10 took the Westin St. Francis Hotel up on its offer of a free room for the night.

Only a decade ago, Sapienza said she would easily get up to 50 survivors joining her by the fountain. Now most of the remaining ones are too frail to participate.

For its part, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors has agreed to raise the official death toll from the earthquake, which for decades has stood at 478, to include the thousands of victims overlooked in the city's haste to discount the earthquake's impact. The number is expected to fall somewhere between 3,000 and 6,000 people, and will be made official before next year's centennial. *AP*

Vietnam's 'Professor Turtle' retiring, but keeps lake legend alive

By Grant McCool

HANOI—Meet "Professor Turtle," keeper of The Lake of the Returned Sword and its mysterious giant reptile.

Zoologist Ha Dinh Duc, one of Hanoi's best-known characters and world famous in his field for tracking the huge turtle living in the center of Vietnam's capital, is retiring soon.

But he is not giving up his quest for recognition of the turtle as a unique species after 15 years of following its movements in the murky green water.

"I call the turtle great-grandfather," said Duc, 65, who displays an obvious attachment to the 2-meter long and 1.1-meter wide endangered turtle he named after an emperor.

"Nobody knows the exact age of the turtle, but for me, it is maybe more than 600 years old." The legend told over the years to Vietnamese children and now to an increasing number of tourists is that 15th-century Emperor Le Loi used a magic heavenly sword to drive out Ming invaders from neighboring China.

A giant turtle emerged while Le Loi was boating on the lake and told him to return the sword to the Dragon King.

The weapon shot from its sheath into the mouth of the turtle, which disappeared underwater.

Thereafter, the body of water called Ho Luc Thuy (Green Water Lake) became known as Ho Hoan Kiem, or "The Lake of the Returned Sword" or "restored sword" in some translations.

In 2000, Duc named the giant turtle Rafetus Leloii. The zoologist gleefully says that his fellow Vietnamese call him "Professor Turtle."

Now, more than a decade after communist Vietnam opened its doors to the outside world, thousands of tourists flock annually to the lake to learn about the legend and perhaps catch a glimpse of the "monster" turtle estimated to weigh about 200 kg.

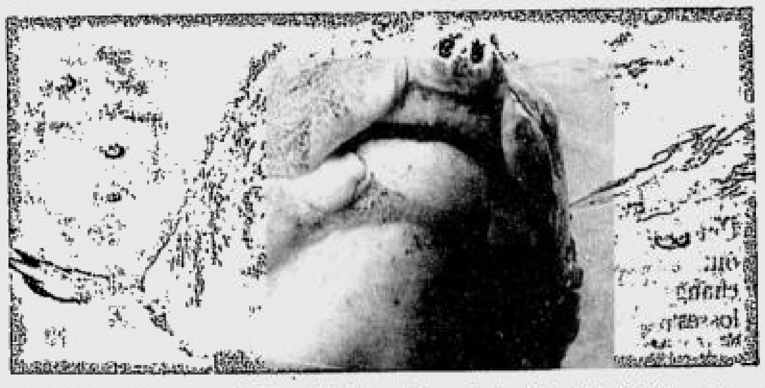
Most travellers have to settle for visiting a temple on the lake that displays a preserved replica of one giant turtle found in the 1960s.

With tourism booming in Hanoi, it is not surprising that there have been more giant turtle sightings reported in recent years.

Five already this year, 27 in 2004 and 29 in 2003, compared with just nine between 1991 and 1993, the years Duc first began campaigning to protect the endangered turtle and the urban lake.

The slightly built, bespectacled professor records all reported sightings of Rafetus Leloii on a computer at his house in Hanoi.

He has about 300 photographs of the turtle's activity on the lake, including images of its pudgy, human-sized head peeking above the surface. Duc's pictures show that the "monster" has a distinctive white spot on the back of its head. *Reuters*



GIANT turtle swims in Hanoi's Hoan Kiem lake Nov. 25, 2002. REUTERS

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Despite promise of citizenship, enlistment among foreign nationals in US Army slipping

LOS ANGELES—The number of foreign nationals enlisting in the US military is dropping, even though service now provides a fast track to American citizenship, an Associated Press review of military data shows.

The decrease in non-citizen enlistees, who hail from countries such as the Philippines, Mexico, Nigeria and Germany, has hit all branches of the armed services, which already are struggling with recruitment as the US presence in Iraq enters year three.

While US citizen enlistments also have fallen, the drop is more pronounced among non-citizens—legal immigrants the military has long let serve as everything from cooks to front line soldiers, though not generally as officers.

Although the Pentagon has placed a heavy emphasis on recruiting, officials say they're not concerned about the enlistment dip among non-citizens.

The decline surprises immigration and military experts, who expected that green-card holders who might otherwise wait years to become Americans would jump at the citizenship offer President George W. Bush extended nearly three years ago.

Instead, the annual number of non-citizen enlistees has fallen nearly 20 percent from fiscal year 2001—the last full year before the changes—to fiscal year 2004, according to military data. Much of the decline, from 11,829 to 9,477 recruits, came last year alone.

By comparison, annual enlistments among citizens dropped 12 percent, from 264,832 to 232,957 recruits.

Although non-citizens represent a fraction of active-duty personnel, every recruit attends Santa Monica College.

A few months ago, he filled out his citizenship application.

"It was easy, a lot easier than joining the military," he said. "I can wait."

America's roughly 30,000 foreign soldiers come from more than 100 enlistments in the Navy and Air Force have declined without exception.

Charles Moskos, a military sociologist at Northwestern University, said he was surprised by the dip but still believes the military will be forced to turn toward non-citizens.

"We can't get enough middle-class kids to die for our countrysider this home." *AP*

Deaths from Marburg epidemic go up to 235

LUANDA—Angolan priests urged their congregations on Sunday to abandon their fear of hospitals so that loved ones could receive treatment for the Marburg virus that has killed more than 200 people.

Early in the outbreak, aid agency Medecins Sans Frontieres, one of the only groups operating in the northern Uige Province, said poor infection control at the hospital there was to blame for some of the cases.

But the World Health Organization says conditions have vastly improved, with a new isolation ward in place and all staff retrained to prevent the virus spreading.

Local bishops, priests, chieftains known as *sobos* and traditional African healers are joining health teams going to villages to boost understanding of the disease, still largely limited to the town of Uige itself, the WHO said.

Preachers made the appeals in churches on Sunday.

"We are telling people that if they are ill—particularly if they have a fever—they must come to us," WHO spokesperson Dave Daigle said by telephone from Uige. "Even if you get better, if you have Marburg there's a good chance you will infect your family."

The latest death toll figures released by the health ministry late on Sunday showed Marburg has killed 235 of the 257 people known to have been infected so far.

Most have been in Uige Province, with scattered other cases occurring across the country amongst travellers returning from the infected area.

Officials worry that more victims are being hidden by families too scared to bring them to hospital.

"A lot of the time, we're finding bodies because people haven't been bringing their sick relatives in," Daigle said.

Many of the victims are under the age of five.

Angry residents attacked WHO workers earlier in the outbreak of the viral hemorrhagic fever, accusing them of spreading the disease in a country whose infrastructure is still struggling to recover from one of Africa's longest running civil wars.

Health officials say they believe that all the victims contracted the disease in and around Uige and that it was not spreading through the rest of the country.

The disease, related to Ebola, is transmitted through bodily fluids including saliva and blood. Symptoms include headaches, internal bleeding, nausea, vomiting and bloody diarrhea.

Many fear what could happen if the disease came into the capital Luanda, many of whose 4 million people live in decrepit apartment blocks or cramped slums that stretch miles inland from the South Atlantic beaches.

"People would be so scared if that happened," 19-year-old Felisbeteo Gil said outside a Luanda church service.

"There are people in my building who have been in Uige and people are scared of them. We must trust in God." *Reuters*

Italy gov't urges 'common sense' to avert collapse

ROME—Italy's government urged rebel ministers to return to the Cabinet on Sunday to avert a coalition collapse and elections that Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi would be likely to lose.

The future of Berlusconi's center-right government has been in doubt since the centrist Union of Christian Democrats (UDC) walked out on Friday demanding sweeping policy changes after the coalition suffered heavy losses at a regional election.

If Berlusconi cannot coax the UDC back he has said he will dissolve the government, forcing a general election a year ahead of schedule.

Interior Minister Giuseppe Pisanu, who is reportedly already preparing for an election that could be held as early as June, said the crisis "could get more complicated unless common sense, good will and good faith come into play soon."

One of the ex-ministers, Carlo Giovanardi, said the parties were close to finalizing an agreement to reenter the Cabinet.

"All the pieces are falling into place. Tomorrow we'll finish it off and by Tuesday or Wednesday we'll go to parliament for a confidence vote and start anew," he told Il Giornale daily.

Berlusconi returned from a weekend at his Sardinian villa on Sunday evening for talks with Umberto Bossi, the leader of the populist Northern League coalition party, who has promised to support the premier.

"No comment, we'll see tomorrow," he told reporters as he left Bossi's house. On Monday Berlusconi is due to meet President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi where he may present his resignation and possibly a new government line-up.

Under Italy's constitution, Berlusconi will almost certainly have to resign, albeit temporarily, to present a new Cabinet to the president and parliament—stopping him from achieving an unprecedented full five-year term with a single administration.

If Berlusconi can construct a new Cabinet, the crisis may be over, giving him a year to improve the center-right's electoral prospects—a tough task given Italy's stagnant economy.

The UDC and other Cabinet skeptics are worried Berlusconi might try to buy himself victory by splashing out on tax cuts. *Reuters*

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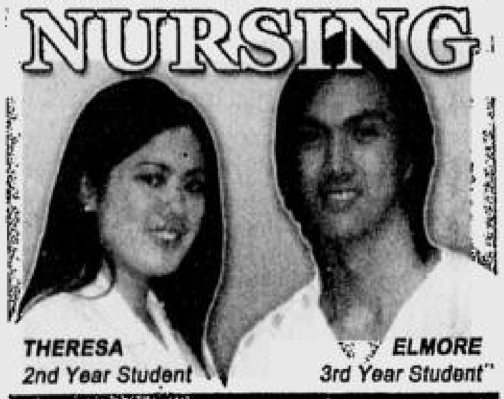
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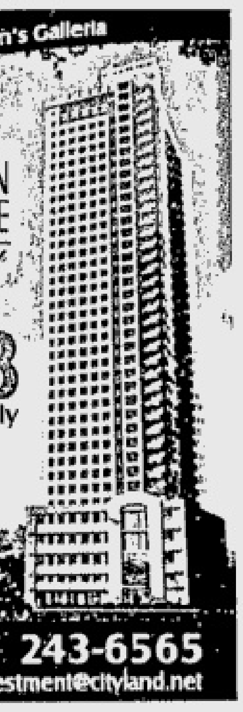
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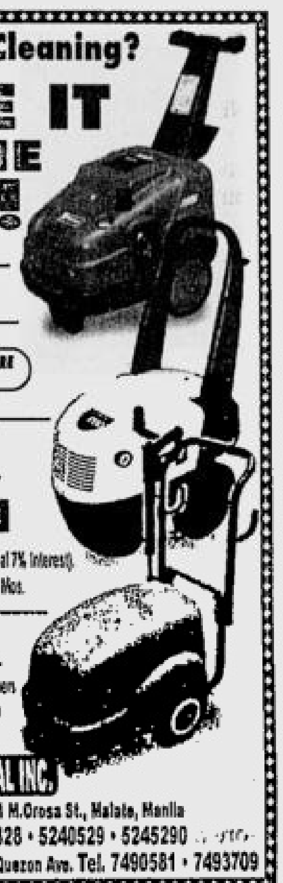
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China blames Japan for diplomatic crisis

BEIJING—China said diplomatic relations with Japan were at a three-decade low and that Tokyo—by refusing to face up to its militaristic past—was to blame. Japan expressed anger at Beijing's refusal to apologize for violent protests that left windows smashed at its diplomatic missions.

"It shouldn't be us who should apologize," said Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei. "It is Japan who should apologize."

Simmering tensions over several issues came to a boiling point this month when Japan approved a new textbook that critics say whitewashes the country's World War II atrocities. Protesters in several Chinese cities also have rallied against Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, with tens of thousands taking to the streets over the weekend.

Police in Shanghai stood by as rioters—some shouting "Kill the Japanese!"—threw stones, eggs and plastic bottles at the Japanese Consulate, and damaged restaurants and cars. Last week, demonstrators smashed windows at the embassy in Beijing and attacked at least two Japanese students.

Fears have emerged about the possible impact the tensions could have on Asia's two largest economies, which are closely linked by trade and investment. Tokyo's benchmark stock index plunged 3.8 percent Monday, its biggest one-day drop in more than 11 months.

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Chinese President Hu Jintao were arranging for a possible meeting in Jakarta over the weekend, where both will be attending the Asia-Africa summit.

But Koizumi, speaking to reporters in Tokyo, cautioned "if it's going to be the exchange of harsh words, it's better not to meet."

Wu, the Chinese vice minister, said at a press conference Monday that blame for the diplomatic row "falls on the Japanese side."

Wu said Japan had failed to handle "historical issues correctly"—an apparent reference to the new textbooks. Many Chinese believe Japan has never truly shown remorse for offenses committed during its invasion of China.

"There are serious difficulties in the China-Japan relationship and these difficulties are the most serious ones since 1972, when China and Japan normalized relations," Wu said.

On Sunday, Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura flew to Beijing to seek an apology for the anti-Japanese demonstrations and compensation for damage. His Chinese counterpart Li Zhaoxing declined, saying China had done nothing wrong.

Machimura met State Councillor Tang Jiaxuan on Monday and the two discussed "the current state of bilateral relations, history, Taiwan and the textbook issues," said Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hatsuhisa Takashima. He did not elaborate.

Japan said Monday it was disappointed by China's lack of regret over the anti-Japanese demonstrations, and its failure to explain how the rallies escalated into riots that left windows smashed.

"No matter what the reasons are, violence is not acceptable," said Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda told reporters in Tokyo.

"We find it regrettable that no clear explanation was presented" during the talks Sunday between Li and Machimura, Hosoda said. "We find it extremely regrettable" that there was no apology. *AP*

BANNERS of landlords and seals fly above jubilant samurai warriors during a reenactment of the age of wars in the 15th century in Fuefuki, Japan, April 17. Over 1,000 people took a crash course from experts on how to wield weapons and fight, and took part in the event to reenact a famed battle. AP

Japan: No need to alter China policy

BEIJING—Japan Monday said it saw no need to change its policy on China despite a series of often violent anti-Japan demonstrations which had created a "very uncomfortable situation."

"We see no need to change our policy vis-a-vis China because of these violent anti-Japanese demonstrations," said Japanese foreign ministry spoke sperson Hatsuhisa Takashima.

He cited the high trade volume between the two sides as a reason why no major policy change was necessary.

Last year Japan's trade with China, including the special administrative region of Hong Kong, totaled 22.2 trillion yen ($214 billion), outpacing the 20.5 trillion yen with the United States.

But Takashima made clear Japan could never tolerate violence as way of solving bilateral conflicts.

"The primary responsibility for the deterioration of ties lies on the mob that inflicted damage to the Japanese Embassy and so forth," he said of demonstrations where Japanese diplomatic missions and businesses were pelted with rocks and bottles.

"We cannot accept the notion that violence is acceptable because of the history issue," he told reporters. "It has created a very uncomfortable situation for our two countries."

Takashima also stressed that Japan's policy toward Taiwan had not changed.

China has warned Japan to stay out of its internal affairs after the United States and Japan jointly issued a statement in February which described Taiwan as a common security issue amid China's military buildup.

It was the first time during their half-century-old alliance that the US and Japan have expressed shared anxiety over tensions in the Taiwan Strait. *AFP*

China worried about trade, may dampen protests, say analysts

BEIJING—China will soon rein in anti-Japanese demonstrations as it is more concerned about not damaging trade and jeopardizing domestic stability, analysts said Monday.

The past three weekends of protests have not pressured Japan into softening its position, but they have likely served their purpose for Beijing by drawing global attention to Japan's wartime history.

"In the next two days, they will start to put out more restrictions," said Chan Chepo, Chinese politics expert at Hong Kong's Lingnan University.

"On the political side, relations will be cold for a while, but the Chinese side doesn't want to harm economic and trade relations."

There might be sporadic, small-scale protests in coming days, but "the fever" should be over, said Joseph Cheng, a China analyst at Hong Kong's City University.

"Chinese leaders always want to ensure they have complete control over foreign policy. They don't want China's policies to be affected by people's sentiments," he said.

"They also understand that these protests must be controlled, otherwise after protesting against Japan this weekend, they may protest against the central government the next weekend."

Still, it is challenging for the government to roll back widespread, nationwide demonstrations after condoning them, if not officially approving them, analysts said.

"I think they are especially wary about the communications through the Internet," Cheng said.

The times, locations and routes of the protests were widely spread on the Internet prior to the rallies.

But on Monday, Internet chatrooms and instant messaging forums carried no announcements of further protests.

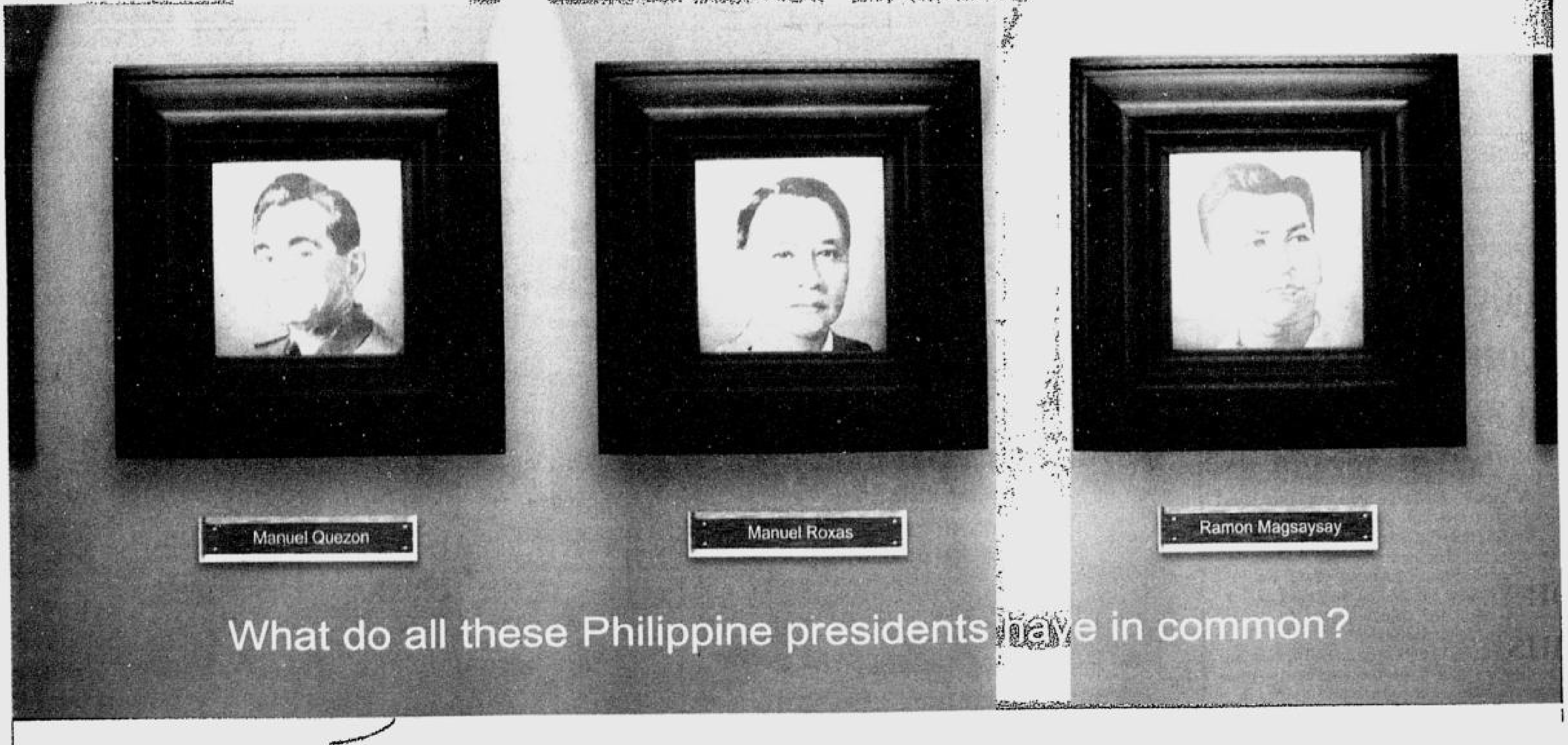
In another sign the government's clampdown has begun, the Communist Party's mouthpiece People's Daily Monday said while demonstrators were correct in expressing anti-Japanese feelings over alleged distortions in Japanese history textbooks, "extreme actions" were counterproductive.

"To adopt certain extreme actions that violate the law does not help solve the issue," the paper said in an editorial.

"In the course of deepening economic globalization, the overall trend is for increasingly closer Sino-Japanese ties."

Meanwhile, some universities banned students from participating in demonstrations. Police have also been discouraging protestors.

"A friend of mine was contacted by the police. They explained that ongoing protests would be bad for our city," said Wu Qiaofei, a protestor in southern China's Guangzhou city. *AFP*



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A VIEW of the North Korean capital Pyongyang shows heavy pollution from coal powered power plants, March 24. South Korea confirmed April 18 the shutdown of North Korea's five-megawatt reactor at the Yongbyon nuclear power plant complex, a signal that Pyongyang could be moving to double its supply of weapons-grade plutonium. AFP

Nokor may be doubling nuke arsenal, South warns

SEOUL—South Korea confirmed Monday that North Korea had suspended operations at its nuclear power plant, a step that would allow technicians to unload spent fuel for reprocessing into bomb-grade plutonium.

Reprocessing would allow North Korea to double its arsenal of nuclear weapons and present a serious setback to efforts for a diplomatic end to the nuclear standoff.

"We are treating this matter very seriously," said Kim Sook, head of the North American affairs bureau at the South Korean foreign ministry.

"I learned that the halt to operations (at the plant) has been verified through various means," he said in an interview with a local radio station.

North Korea has repeatedly said that it planned to build more atomic bombs after declaring itself a nuclear-armed state in February.

Earlier this month senior North Korean officials told a visiting US specialist that they would halt the reactor and unload spent fuel for reprocessing by the end of this month.

The five-megawatt reactor at the Yongbyon complex, 90 km north of the capital Pyongyang, is North Korea's only functioning reactor and is loaded with 8,000 fuel rods.

The last time North Korea unloaded and reprocessed the spent fuel, in 2003, it produced enough weapons-grade plutonium for six to eight nuclear weapons, according to experts.

By reprocessing another batch of 8,000 spent fuel rods, North Korea could produce enough weapons-grade plutonium to allow it to double that number of bombs.

Selig Harrison, a US expert who visited Pyongyang earlier this month, said that senior North Korean leaders told him the country would start reprocessing the 8,000 spent fuel rods in late April.

The specialist from the Center for International Policy in Washington said the North Koreans were no longer interested in a step-by-step elimination of their nuclear programmes in return for rewards.

Instead they would offer to freeze the production of nuclear bombs only if the United States promised not to try to topple the communist regime, Harrison was told. *AFP*

Terrorists bent on using CBWs, Australia says

SYDNEY—Terrorists in Asia and elsewhere are bent on using chemical and biological weapons which present a "real and deadly threat," Australia said Monday as a major antiproliferation conference opened in Sydney.

"Chemical and biological weapons (CBW) present a real and deadly threat," said Foreign Minister Alexander Downer in a statement.

"Terrorists, including in our region, are intent on developing CBW capabilities, while proliferators are using increasingly sophisticated means to source the ingredients for weapons of mass destruction."

Downer told the annual meeting of the Australia Group—a forum of 38 countries, plus the European Commission, which works to prevent CBW proliferation—that international cooperation on export controls was the only way to combat the threat.

"Osama bin Laden has publicly stated since the late 1990s al-Qaida's willingness to acquire and use chemical and biological weapons," Downer told delegates.

Last year, he said, a police raid on the house of an alleged Jemaah Islamiyah operative in the southern Philippines discovered a JI training manual for chemical and biological terrorism.

In 2003 four men were charged with terrorism offences in London after recipes and ingredients for making ricin—a toxin controlled by the Australia Group—were discovered in two houses.

Algerian Kamel Bourgass, who is suspected of links to al-Qaida, was last week sentenced to 17 years in prison by a British court for planning attacks involving ricin and other poisons. *AFP*

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'Arms race'

EDITORIAL

LET's hope that the current crackdown on owners of loose firearms and private armed groups will be a continuing campaign, and not just a "ningas cogon" (brushfire) type of thing that will die down after some time.

The present campaign is a reaction to the recent killing in broad daylight of former Rep. Henry Lanot of Pasig City. But Nandy Pacheco of the Gunless Society has described the move as "palliative and recycled."

"This is an old song," Pacheco said. "They do that every time something like this (Lanot's murder) happens." And indeed, if one reviews newspaper clippings of the past 10 years, this is what has been happening: there is a great show of activity by the police and the military after a high-profile killing, but after a while, the activity dies down and the owners of loose firearms and armed groups are back in business.

What is needed is first, a nationwide, honest-to-goodness campaign against loose firearms and armed groups that serve politicians. The government was able to do this during the martial law dictatorship of Ferdinand E. Marcos, except that Marcos converted the entire Armed Forces and the police into his private army.

We are sure that if government officials will have the political will, a way can be found to control the proliferation and use of loose firearms. For instance, it will be noted that crimes committed with guns go down considerably during the election period when the Comelec and the police enforce a gun ban. Strict enforcement of a gun ban should do wonders for law and order.

Second, a strict gun control law should be passed by Congress to curb the growing culture of guns. As suggested by Pacheco, a strict ban on the carrying of firearms in public places should be enforced. Only uniformed soldiers and police and other law enforcers on duty should be allowed to carry guns in public.

Third, the police should continue with their round-the-clock checkpoints and high-visibility patrols to check on people toting firearms or carrying them in their cars. The checkpoints should be manned only by uniformed policemen bearing nameplates so that unauthorized people cannot set up similar "checkpoints" and use them for criminal purposes.

Fourth, the government should plug the entry points of smuggled firearms and crack down on unauthorized manufacturers of homemade firearms (*paltik*). "*Paltiks*" are cheap and can be easily obtained by criminals.

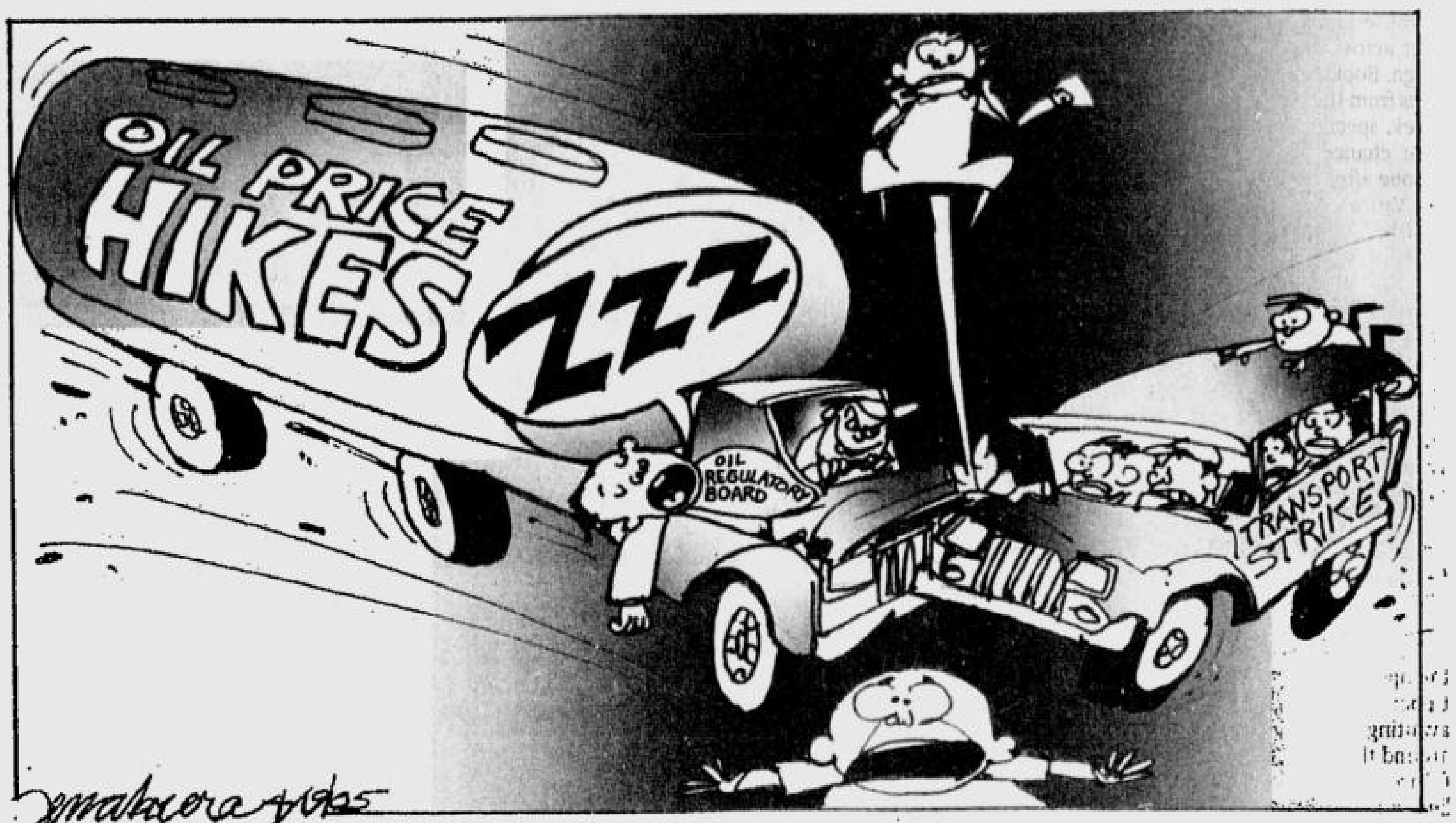
Fifth, the government and the private sector have to join hands in shattering the culture of the gun. Nowadays, a man is considered macho if he packs guns—and the higher the caliber, the more sophisticated and the deadlier, the better for his image. And so, can we blame our youth if they want to play with toy replicas of high-powered guns? And can we blame them if later, when they have grown up, they also will want to carry and display high-powered guns?

Instead of promoting a culture of guns and death, let us promote a culture of life and peace.

The business and media sectors can help in promoting the creation of a gunless, peaceful and life-friendly society. Even the manufacturers and sellers of guns can do their part by not displaying high-powered firearms in gun stories and shows. These firearms are not for everybody; they have a special clientele—the police and the military—who can be shown these guns in private. No need to display them in public shows for gun freaks to fantasize and salivate over.

The media—particularly the movies and TV—could reduce the number of movies and programs featuring the use of guns. As it is, there is now an "arms race" of a different kind in the movies and TV—movies and shows try to do other movies and shows one better by featuring more high-powered guns and more destructive armaments. These movies and shows tend to put across the message that the deadlier and more destructive, the better. This local kind of "arms race" has to stop.

Filipinos are a smiling, gentle and peaceful people. They would like nothing more than to live in peace and tranquility. And yet we cannot understand why a "gun culture" has grown in our society and has proven very hard to uproot. The government and the private sector have to join hands to try to stop the proliferation of loose firearms and the growth of private armies, and to shatter the culture of the gun if we want to live in a peaceful, orderly and tranquil society.



More equal than others

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

FORMER president Joseph Estrada has badgered the anti-graft court for another pass from detention. There's no "life-threatening" medical problem. He merely wants to party.

The opposition's "chairman emeritus" will turn 69. And he'd like to blow out cake candles, at his lush Tanay resthouse, (a.k.a. detention camp), cheered by friends, unable to squeeze into the earlier court-approved party.

"Few things could be sadder in the (Filipino) culture than to celebrate one's birthday virtually alone," his weepy motion declared. King Lear said it in less-lachrymose terms: "When we are born we cry that we are come /To this great stage of fools."

Shoddy national prisons in Muntinlupa, Palawan, Zamboanga, Mindoro, and other local jails, hold thousands of inmates. Like Erap, the inmates recoil at marking "birthdays virtually alone."

Unlike Estrada, most are broke. And it's cash that drives treadmill motions for time out from the clink. Unlike in Tanay, "conditions are generally poor and life harsh" in Philippine prisons, a United Nations study notes.

So, where does this leave the Constitution's equal protection clause? "All are equal; but some are more equal than others," George Orwell noted in "Animal Farm."

Of course, Estrada will soon make another pitch for yet another pass. So, here's an unsolicited suggestion: end those piecemeal requests.

The present system afflicts everybody. Estrada chafes at delays. It saps the limited time of the court, prosecutors and defense from their main task: to complete trial of plunder charges, a trial which is already on overtime. Worse, delays chip away at faith in reasonably swift justice.

Is there a legal way for simplifying the process? "Our lives are frittered away by detail," Thoreau once complained. "Simplify. Simplify."

But how? Can Estrada ask the court to stamp approval, say, for a whole-year's pass?

Would that pass need an annex of "must visit" days, like: birthdays of the spouse and children (legitimate?); graduation days, prom nights; (multiple) family anniversaries?

Assumption, Christmas, New Year, Holy Week and other religious holidays would automatically permit a stroll downtown. Add national holidays. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is wont to decree holidays, on spur of the moment. They should also be included.

Only those "more equal than others," would get this privilege. If this "strong republic" implements the Supreme Court decision that Bongbong Marcos welshed on his taxes, he'd get the same perk. But ordinary prisoners, who lack scratch, won't enjoy equal status.

This is possible in a country where "The 10 Commandments," in daily life, have been devalued into "The 10 Suggestions." Thus, our constitutional way of life is reduced to rubble. The result, in King Lear's language, is a "great stage of fools."

Today's endless wheedling for personal privilege, separate and unavailable to less-endowed prisoners, symbolizes a dwarfed, fractured, inutile opposition.

This is tragic because mounting problems—Marcos and Estrada kleptocracies augmented by Jose Pidal, a politicized military, a Congress subservient to taipans, multiplying communist fronts to rádical power shifts abroad—require a visionary principled opposition.

President Arroyo's waffling from one ineffective cliché to another exacerbates the problems.

Philippine Coconut Authority administrator Evangeline Valbuena blew the whistle on a dubious proposal: to dump P8.4 billion from the coconut levy into a hybrid project in a non-coconut province: Agusan del Sur.

Haven't we learned from Marcos? Under PD 582, farmers were compelled to replant with hybrids—available only at Eduardo Cojuangco's Bugsuk Island nurseries in Palawan.

The Catholic Bishop's Conference pastoral flayed a fund-strapped administration's wont to sap the levy. It's not helping small farmers from whom the levy was extorted. *Ang macahilo sa isda ang iyang kahag*, says the Bicolano proverb "What poisons the fish is its greed."

Who protested when Valbuena, like Land Bank's Asca Ramirez, was fired for blowing the whistle? "Governments must create an environment that encourages, instead of penalizes, whistle blowers," 135 countries—the Philippines included—declared at the 9th International Anti-Corruption conference in South Africa.

Rep. Exequiel Javier of Antique was the congressman who slipped, behind closed doors of a bicameral committee, the "poison pill" provision into the 1997 tax bill, recalls former Neda secretary Solita Monsod.

"The Lucio Tan cigarette companies were the main beneficiaries... and it cost government increasingly larger and larger amounts in annual lost revenues," she notes. "Shamefully, that 'poison pill' was not taken out in the 2004 bill."

What Representative Javier sees in the mirror every morning is his business. But it's the opposition's task to scrub "poison pills." Has it shown any inclination to do that?

Recently, China and India, acknowledged powers for the 21st century, signed a cooperation pact. "Dramatic shifts are changing the map of Asia," the INQUIRER noted editorially. "We are fighting the same battles, over the same political and economic terrain, as in the 1980s... while our neighbors have moved resolutely into the 21st."

To adapt to these geopolitical changes, the next probable proposal from the opposition's chairman emeritus will be as radical: how about an overnight pass to mark the San Juan festivities?

(E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph)

Déjà vu, of sorts

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

IGNACIO Bunye defended his boss last week against Susan Roces' tirade in this wise: "We already know the truth. We won by 1 million votes. President GMA is recognized as the winner not only in the country but by other world leaders. Win or lose, we should respect justice whichever way it goes."

I am glad at least that he did not repeat the Supreme Court's unfortunate literary allusion to Omar Khayyam's famous lines about the "Moving Finger" that has written, and having written its words, could not be undone. Those lines, as I said the other week, referred to the handwriting on the wall that appeared before Belshazzar, King of Babylon, foretelling the end of his tyrannical rule. The words apply more to GMA than to Roces.

The fact that other world leaders recognize GMA means nothing. Neither George W. Bush nor Pope John Paul II is a Filipino voter. Though with Benjamin Abalos there, I wouldn't be surprised if their names materialize in one or many of the ballot boxes in elections to come. Yes, even Pope John Paul II's: the dead have been known to vote plentifully under the current Comelec chief's watch.

The fellow quite incidentally dares Roces to prove her claims of massive cheating during the last elections. Well, maybe he should persuade the Supreme Court to change its mind about dismissing her case so she can. While at this, Abalos himself should first prove he deserves to remain not just inside the Comelec but outside of jail. Didn't he skewer years of struggle to computerize canvassing by awarding a billion pesos or so to a patently unqualified bidder? He is the one to ensure clean elections?

As to the "we" in Bunye's statement, that is a most curious "we." It cannot possibly refer to the people, if SWS and Ibon are to be believed. Most of them do not think GMA won the elections, a most disturbing finding not just because it reflects a perception but because it hints at reality. I do not know what samples SWS and Ibon used, whether they included voters or non-voters alike. But if their sample included largely voters, that is scary. You are not likely to say you do not think GMA won the elections if you voted for her. You are going to say she did. That the majority said they did not think she did, well, like I said it is disturbing. Particularly when you take it alongside Pulse Asia's latest finding that public confidence in her has fallen to an all-time low.

That brings us to the déjà vu part, which is, as the opposition people have amply suggested, that we are looking at another Cory scenario.

There are, of course, vast differences between Cory and Roces. Chief of them being that Cory's cause was patently purer and nobler. She was the victim of a horrendous iniquity—her husband was murdered by the dictator—and her quest for justice took on the aspect of the entire country's own quest for justice from pretty much the same oppression. It had a deep moral resonance that Roces can never hope to evoke, even if it were true that her husband was "robbed of his dream," as she herself puts it. Being "salvaged" politically is not of the same order of crime as being "salvaged" physically. And, of course, the Edsa forces will have no end of things to say about the chasm between FPJ's and Ninoy's dreams.

But the similarities are uncanny nevertheless, and arise as well from the one thing that catapulted Cory to the forefront of national affairs. That is the way Roces has been able to project herself, wittingly or unwittingly, as the opposite of GMA—the way Cory was able to project herself as the opposite of Marcos. The idea, or image, is a powerful one, laden with mythical overtones. Which are the tones ordinary Filipinos tend to hear, the way dogs are able to hear high frequencies.

We do not need to go back to the contrasts, real or imagined, between Cory and Marcos. But gaze at the particular one, image-wise, between Roces and GMA, which already became apparent last December when Roces was thrust into the political limelight with the death of her husband: GMA likes to say one thing and do another, chief of them vow not to run again but do so anyway, and with a ferocity that leaves government penniless. Roces means exactly what she says, her utterances carrying with them a ring of conviction. GMA tries to please, or appease, everyone, Cory and Imelda alike. Roces lashes out at those she believes has done her wrong, not the least ABS-CBN. GMA, at her most pained expressions at the sight of stricken humanity, comes off as plastic. Roces at her calmest in the face of great loss comes off as honest.

GMA proclaims her accomplishments at every turn. Roces likes to draw attention to what her husband has done. GMA speaks from a script, Roces speaks from the heart. GMA talks about everything, Roces talks only about things she knows. GMA speaks the language of technocratese or PR, whichever is more convenient, Roces speaks the language of experience and feeling, whichever is more understandable. GMA is an economist who longs desperately to be an actress, Roces is an actress who longs desperately to be left alone. GMA is a President who regales her constituents with a badly written movie. Roces is a citizen who offers her friends the spectacle of a life well borne.

GMA likes power, and began Day One of her first term preparing for a second. Roces likes friends, and thanked everyone who flew to her side in her moment of need. GMA says she is the Pope's—if not God's—appointed, sent by them to pluck this country out of the wilderness. Roces says she is not a political person and is not interested in being one. She is just there to inspire, as well she can, she has no plans of leading a movement. However can she? She is just—a housewife.

Ah, but truly déjà vu.

The Church's youth in the 'New Pentecost'

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

A HUNDRED and fifteen cardinal-electors have converged on Rome for the historic conclave—the first in the third millennium—that will elect the successor of Pope John Paul II. The task has been made more difficult for the electors because of the very long shadow that JPII had cast across the world in his nearly 27 years of reign. Bookies everywhere have made brisk business from the betting on who'll fill his shoes. Last week, speculators were giving Italians a 42-percent chance of regaining control of the papal throne after their nearly 500-year domination of the Vatican was interrupted by the assumption of Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyla into the papacy in 1978.

* * *

Most favored by the bookies among the Italians is Dionigi Tettamanzi, archbishop of Milan (23 points). He is followed by Francis Arinze of Nigeria (14 points). Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, who served with JPII for 24 years in the Congregation of the Faith has been an early favorite, but more names are being eyed, including Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger of Paris, a convert from Judaism, and Francisco Cardinal Javier Errazuriz of Santiago, Chile. This only shows that at this point, the field is really wide open and it could be anybody.

* * *

The 115 Cardinal electors may be likened to the apostles of Christ who were gathered in the Upper Room nearly two thousand years ago, awaiting His promise to send the Holy Spirit. And around the world, in various churches, the faithful are accompanying them in prayer for their enlightenment and guidance, that they choose a pontiff who would best answer to the needs and problems of the Church in the third millennium.

The dilemma the electors have to confront may be narrowed down to a search for and choice of another "Wojtyla," the "Great Communicator" on the verities of faith, the charismatic media idol who became the "Church's global front man," selling the faith to the masses all over the world seemingly effortlessly, even as he hobnobbed with the world's dignitaries; or a more traditional pastor, administrator and disciplinarian, who will assiduously attend to the many problems of the Church?

* * *

Something tells me that JPII's successor has to be both. Charisma will play a major role especially in this age of digital communication. As one writer aptly put it, JPII could not have asserted all the tough moral teachings he espoused in an increasingly secular world, such as the sanctity of human life and the indissolubility of marriage, had he not been able to communicate them with his charisma and charm.

But there are other problems that continue to plague the Church, such as the dwindling priestly vocations in many countries, the sexual harassment issue against some clergy, and the stagnation of the Church in Europe. And there is Islam. All of which means effective networking.

* * *

One of the most remarkable phenomena pilgrims observed in the recent funeral of the Pope in Rome was the incredible number of youths who volunteered to help the millions of pilgrims amid trying circumstances everyone had to go through in Rome. The presence of these youth volunteers from many nations reminded pilgrims of the Jubilee Year 2000 celebration, when these youths answered the Pope's call to help manage the huge throngs for that event. Doubtless, the fire and zeal of the youths can be attributed to the very effective apostolate that JPII exercised on them. He was one pope who really connected with the young, principally through direct contact in the various World Youth Day observances held in various cities. In fact, in Church circles, these youths have come to be called the "John Paul II generation" or the "millennial generation." But the most remarkable development, as some media have noted, is the fact that JPII inspired among this generation a perceptible new orthodoxy and conservatism that have made tens of thousands of them foreswear such things as premarital sex, opposition to contraception, abortion, etc. With the Pope's guiding light, they have returned to traditional forms of worship. The thinking of Church experts is that this generation will shape the Church in a very distinct manner.

* * *

As I close this coverage of the Pope's funeral, I wish to recall a conversation aboard the plane enroute to Manila with former RP ambassador to the Vatican Howard Dee, on the future of the post-JPII Church. Dee expressed the hope that all the phenomenal outpouring of affection and fervor for JPII in the springtime of the Church would not be in vain, and instead strengthen the Church in the third millennium. I asked Ambassador Dee to put his thoughts together and he wrote:

"At the beginning of this new millennium, Pope John Paul II called for a new evangelization to counteract the growing secularization of the Christian world, and he boldly announced the coming of a new Pentecost. The Pope beckoned: 'Open your doors to Christ, welcome the Spirit, so that a new Pentecost may take place in every community! A new humanity, a joyful one, will arise from your midst.'"

The Pope said we must imitate the apostles in the Upper Room, gathered around Mary, praying while awaiting the descent of the Holy Spirit. It will be a new springtime for our faith, he promised.

Last Friday, as millions of the faithful gathered with the successors of Christ's apostles at the Holy Father's funeral rites, a brisk spring wind was blowing, as one did during the first Pentecost. We may have been living witnesses of the New Pentecost, when hundreds of millions of people around the globe were touched by the Holy Spirit, enkindling in their hearts the fire of His love, preparing us for the new advent and the new springtime of our faith as promised by John Paul II.

The sordid reality

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

IN "THE WEDDING DATE," Dermot Mulroney portrays a handsome, accomplished and urbane man who just happens to work as a paid escort. He is hired, for $6,000, to act as the boyfriend of Debra Messing at the wedding of her sister in London.

Why would a good-looking career woman who shouldn't need help to find a date be compelled to rent herself an escort at a family event?

Well, it just happens that two years earlier, her fiancé broke off their engagement, and this fiancé just happens to be the best man at her sister's wedding. Mulroney is there to serve as "proof" that Messing's character has not just recovered from her heartache but has also moved on and bagged herself the "perfect" man.

While "The Wedding Date" is diverting enough, its plot and characterizations are so given to clichés it should have gone straight to video, having all the weight of a TV movie. But I did find it interesting that the story of an independent, educated woman getting into an entanglement with a paid male escort should be considered romantic fare.

I had to wonder if the filmmakers would have been as dewy-eyed about the situation if the gender roles had been reversed and it was Messing who was the hired hand. True, "The Wedding Date" had been promoted as giving a twist to "Pretty Woman," where Julia Roberts was a paid escort to Richard Gere's businessman. But even in "Pretty Woman" Roberts had a turn as a typical streetwalker before Gere dressed her up, in a shopping scene that is every woman's real secret fantasy.

* * *

"THE WEDDING Date," though, goes out of its way to sanitize Mulroney's profession, tacking on a scene where we discover that he's not just a stud but a stud with a comparative literature degree from Brown. He also takes pains to explain that he considers his work as not just providing sexual services to women in need, but also building up their self-esteem and getting them to open themselves and their hearts to love and vulnerability. Yeah, right.

Clearly, Hollywood is still uncomfortable with the idea of sexual transactions in which the man plays the less powerful party, the one who's "bought" and needs to follow orders. If he is to be credible as a romantic lead, he must be in the sex industry, out of a sense of mission and compassion. Whereas Julia Roberts—to return to "Pretty Woman"—is in the trade only so she could have money for college.

The truth is that prostitution is still viewed as largely a trade women engage in, as reflected in our laws and public attitudes. In fact, a woman spotted on the street without a male escort and "no visible means of support" is at risk of being apprehended for vagrancy, on suspicion of engaging in informal prostitution. On the other hand, men loitering on sidewalks, or panhandling, are usually left alone unless they prove themselves nuisances to passersby and business establishments.

Hollywood may be in the business of promoting fantasy, but in the case of "The Wedding Date," it really isn't too far off from the sordid reality, as its creators' desperate attempts to repackage the truth show.

* * *

"I KNOW a woman experiencing abuse. How do I help her?" The question is asked in "Enough!" a brochure published by the Women's Crisis Center (WCC) with the support of The Body Shop. Here are the answers:

- Allow her to tell her story, listen and believe in what she has to say.
- Let her know that she is not the only woman who experiences abuse.
- Assure her that the violence is not her fault.
- Break the silence. Call up the WCC Helplines: 926-7744/922-5235.
- Inform her about her rights under RA 9262, and how to assert them:
  —Right to confidentiality, respect and dignity
  —Right to get a protection order
  —Right to file criminal and administrative charges
  —Right to apply for a hold departure order against her abuser
  —Right to custody and support for her children
  —Right to a ten-day paid leave
  —Right to support services from the government.
- Be an advocate. When she decides to do so, accompany her to the Barangay or Family Court and help her get a protection order.

* * *

• ENCOURAGE her to secure original copies of important documents necessary for possible future legal action (e.g., marriage certificate, birth certificate, land titles) and give them to trusted people.

- **Discuss with her the right time to leave, considering her safety and security. It would be best to leave with the children and necessary belongings.**
- **Encourage her to seek help from supportive individuals (i.e., family, neighborhood), institutions, and agencies. Provide her with the contact information of the nearest crisis center for women.**
- **Assist her in preparing alternative plans for herself and her children.**
- **Inform barangay authorities if the perpetrator is seen hanging around the vicinity or area from which he is prohibited in the protection order.**

Ah, Love…

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

IT has been noted that the colonies of Spain in America were conquered by arms, while the Philippines was subjugated through the clergy, which some refer to as a different type of army. America was on the whole secular; in the Philippines, the spirit was religious. In South America, the abuses that triggered the revolution were chiefly economic; in the Philippines, it was against a theocratic government.

Spain held on to the Philippines through the clergy and, for 300 years, faced no serious revolt from the natives. There were military mutinies and attacks on Spanish officials in some of the provinces, but the revolts were of local nature.

From the time of Legaspi, peace would be broken chiefly by attacks on the Chinese, basically for economic reasons, or for fear of their number.

Still, almost all the natives who led the revolution of 1896 were partly Chinese. Many of the Chinese Sangleys who were educated in Europe emerged as economic and intellectual leaders. They were the men who were chiefly instrumental in leading movements against the Spanish government in the Philippines, believing as they did that they spoke for the people.

In General Emilio Aguinaldo's Cabinet, 27 were of Chinese descent, Aguinaldo among them. So were nine of his generals (one was, in fact, pure Chinese), as well as his finance agents. And yet the Chinese comprised only one percent of the population.

The Philippines was more a mission than a colony. In 1898, most of the secular clergy were natives; but the religious and the bishops were still Spanish. Parish churches of 16 of the 20 provincial capitals in Luzon were in the hands of the Spanish clergy. The importance of the parish priest was indicated by the fact that in the directory of officials, his name always came first.

The first serious challenge against Spanish rule came in 1872. On the surface, the attack was easily overcome; but the undercurrents of the animosity between the government and the people persisted.

The word "Gomburza" (which stands for surnames of the martyred priests, Gomez, Burgos and Zamora) became the password of the Katipunan society, and in 1872, in Cavite "independence" rang out for the first time as the battle cry of the Filipinos' struggle against Spain.

But as early as 1871, the Manila authorities had already received anonymous warnings of an imminent uprising against Spain, after a squadron left Cavite to take part in the operations against the Muslims in Jolo and Mindanao. Due to problems in the mother country and the loss of South America, the heads of the monastic orders, feeling more threatened than usual, induced a mutiny among the native troops in Cavite so that they could denounce it in advance to show they still had control over the people. That way, they would also underscore their usefulness, not to mention their importance, to the Spanish Crown.

The conspirators were supposed to have been meeting in the house of D. Joaquin Pardo de Tavera and that of D. Jacinto Zamora, a native priest. All the necessary arrangements had been made for the attack on the night of Jan. 20, the fiesta of Sampaloc in honor of Our Lady of Loreto. It was thought that with everybody busy with the festivities and social functions, like dinners and balls, the authorities would be caught off-guard.

The plan was to kill the soldiers and guards in their barracks; the orderlies and servants were to murder their superiors; and a bodyguard was to assassinate Governor General Rafael Izquierdo in Malacañang. The friars and other Spaniards were also to be killed.

It is said that love has played a principal part in the failure of nearly all conspiracies in the Philippines. (There must be some kind of moral here but don't ask me what.) In this case, it was a love affair between a Filipina and a Spanish sergeant of a native artillery regiment. The affair had been over for some time. But on the afternoon of Jan. 20, the former lovers met by accident, and he asked her that they renew their relationship. At first she refused, only to yield shortly, and they spent a pleasant afternoon together.

As the night of the attack drew near and the sergeant prepared to return to his regiment, the woman tried to persuade him to stay. He told her not to worry, he just had to be present at the roll call but he'd be back immediately. But she became agitated and insisted that he stayed and that he shouldn't return to the barracks. He began to wonder why she was so adamant. After all they hadn't been on for some time. "So, why do you want me to neglect my duties," he asked her.

(Data from John R.M. Taylor's "The Philippine Insurrection against the United States: A Compilation of Documents with Notes and Introduction").

(To be Continued)

Money

YOUNG BLOOD

Nestor Aldwin D. Tio Jr.

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I'M not a student anymore, but nothing much has changed. I still do not have enough money. I still find it hard to make the regular salary last the whole month. Not only do I have bills to pay; there are also the numerous faces of temptations, like buying a cool new pair of VANS sneakers or that new "Snow Patrol" CD I've been devoutly wishing for since Christmas.

The lack gets worse with a girlfriend. The shoes and the CD I can do without, but try saying no to a fancy dinner that she has been bugging for all week long, and experience first-hand that hell hath no fury indeed. There are fates worse than death, this I have found out.

Mind you, I save every last cent. But then I see something I like and—BOOM!!! There goes my money. I am very cautious with money, that is why I don't gamble. I don't plunk down my hard-earned cash in some flimsy games of chance—unless it's a sure shot. If I could only get a peso out of every sure shot, I could pay off the national debt—twice over.

Somebody once asked me if I thought about money a lot. Since I don't have money, what's there to think about? What I really think about is all those money out there that's waiting to be mine. If only I could find a way to lay my hands on it. I could win the lottery, inherit from a rich relative, maybe I could hit it big like Bill Gates, or maybe I'm just dreaming so I'd better wake up. Oh well, as long as I'm dreaming, might as well wish for a pony.

But seriously, I do not mind having more money. I am well aware of the arguments about it being the "root of all evil" and all that crap, but saying that I do not want more money is like saying that I do sex just "for the sake of art."

To be realistic, with more money, I can better help myself and the people close to me. I can finally afford to give my parents that nest egg to make their golden years golden—literally. Having more money would also enable me to go into other academic and intellectual pursuits. I could get an MBA, maybe even a law degree. Heck, maybe I'll just buy the whole school!

I know I won't get rich just by waiting for my luck to turn. I could grow old and die penniless before winning the lottery, and my relative could give all his money to his cat.

I know nothing beats hard work and perseverance, but combining them with dreams of good luck and good fortune really makes the future look far more rosy and colorful. You can agree or disagree with me on this. While you're all arguing, excuse me awhile, I'll go ride my pony.

Nestor Aldwin D. Tio Jr., 28, a graduate of Cebu Doctors' College, currently works in his father's company.

Middle-class

Jason dC. Gavina

I HAVE always thought that, maybe, I was born to be exceptional. And that I can go well against the odds. The way I was born is one proof of this.

I cannot exactly tell you how many cows have been sold by my *lolo* because of me. But I am sure that I didn't "c[o]me out well"—a premature baby, born caesarean in the middle of a brownout to financially unstable parents, who lost their money to a thief in the hospital room. The circumstances could have been worse.

During the first two weeks of my life inside an incubator, I couldn't have known how caring the world could be. But as I grew up, believing that a man is truly the master of his own fate even in a cruel world, I learned to see the comedy in every tragedy.

As far as academics is concerned, modesty aside, I can say I am fairly intelligent. I went to pre-school near to our house, garnered honors there, then moved on to a private elementary school where I learned my English. I puffed up my ego balloon in a science high school, and now I am an "Iskolar ng Bayan" taking up economics, wanting to be a lawyer, dreaming to be a senator.

My life could have been more ordinary, but I grew up in a middle-class family. I was able to go into a private elementary school because my mom left to work as a DH (domestic helper) in Hong Kong. She came back a couple of years before my "memorable" elementary graduation—memorable because I was not awarded my diploma for the reason that my parents wasn't able to pay on time my tuition in full. A humbling experience, indeed. I finally got the diploma in the summer that followed.

I wear Bench shirts and a few branded jeans, which I can only afford when they are put up on "discount sale." I live in a house, handed down to my family by my *lola* who have migrated to the United States. My Dad earns a salary just enough for our needs, though occasionally he gets to save enough for some things we want. Mom sells AVON products. We sell ice from our freezer to our neighbors. I always find delight every time a package comes from our relatives abroad, because that would probably mean a new pair of shoes and chocolates.

I've never been to a Starbucks outlet. We eat *tuyo, sardinas* and *pancit kanin*. Sometimes my mom just buys *lutong ulam* since it would be cheaper for us. The last time we had fruit salad and pancit bihon was on Christmas Eve last year.

I have a Nokia 6510 and a problematic computer.

I just turned 17, and there were no parties at all, which everybody thinks I could have had since I am an only child. I was given some money to celebrate my birthday, but I decided to rather spend it for something more important.

With my experiences, I have learned to value things that I have, but I do not think one should forever be content with his or her present condition if he or she can strive for a better one. I believe that the richness of life is not just about having one's material desires fulfilled. It is also being measured by the experiences, lessons and wisdom one gains, and by the character he or she becomes.

I grew up middle-class. And I have learned so much this way.

Jason dC. Gavina, 17, is a first year BS Economics student at the University of the Philippines-Los Baños.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please address it to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address and information about your age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with.

False Christianity

I TRY to figure it out, but I find it too difficult to reconcile our country's status as the only Christian nation in Asia with its being the second most corrupt in the region. How can a Christian nation be so corrupt, and many of its people so addicted to thievery and covetousness?

I think the answer to the above question does not lie merely in the lack of political will on the part of government leaders. It is to be found, even more so, in the kind of Christianity this nation has embraced and followed.

There are two kinds of Christianity: (1) genuine or true Christianity and (2) imitation or false Christianity. The former was announced and taught by Christ through the Scriptures. It extols the virtues of honesty, humility and trustworthiness, and it influences human character and behavioral conduct. False Christianity, on the other hand, does not put Christ's teachings into practice and makes "little actual effort to address spiritual concerns."

Some false Christian leaders at times even act as supernumerary politicians, and during hotly contested elections, offer the votes of their fanatical and unthinking followers in exchange for material benefits—in cash or in kind. And so, at the end of the day people get a fairly good idea as to which kind of Christianity—the genuine or the false—has affected adversely our standard of conduct and catapulted this so-called Christian nation to the gallery of the most corrupt in this part of the world.

—JESUS NATANAUAN,
Barangay 1, Talisay, Batangas

Statistics shows incompetence, corruption

THIS is a reaction to the Ombudsman's letter "Premature insistence" (PDI, 03/15/05), which was a response to our letter titled "Suspension or dismissal of corrupt officials not enough." (PDI, 03/02/05)

Our insistence to forfeit with dispatch the ill-gotten wealth of Deputy Customs Commissioner Reynaldo Nicolas and Customs officer Manuel Valencia is only the "tip of the iceberg," so to speak; per our research, the Ombudsman—from 1979, the year it was created, up to January 2005—has ordered forfeited almost nothing of the ill-gotten wealth of corrupt government officials and their private co-conspirators.

To show that the Office of the Ombudsman has not been doing its job in fighting graft and corruption, here are some eye-popping statistics taken from the Judicial Statistics Office of the Sandiganbayan.

From February 1979 to Jan. 31, 2005, there were 19,373 cases of malversation, estafa and violations of the anti-graft law, filed by the Office of the Ombudsman. The cases involve something like P14.5 billion of allegedly stolen public money. Of this amount, almost nothing has been recovered by the government. The Judicial Statistics Office of the Sandiganbayan did not bother to record the amount recovered because it is very, very insignificant compared to the amount stolen.

Here are more figures: The Ombudsman filed a total of 28,052 cases against corrupt government officials and their co-conspirators from Feb. 1979 up to Jan. 31, 2005. Out of these cases, 4,050 were dismissed without trial, 1,996 were withdrawn by the Office of the Ombudsman and 3,732 were archived, and 3,488 ended up in decisions acquitting the accused. In short, 47 percent of the cases filed by the Ombudsman before the Sandiganbayan were either poorly prepared or were "compromised" to let the accused go scot-free for "some considerations" under the table.

It is about time that the Office of the President and Congress put their heads together to improve the performance of the Ombudsman by remedial legislation. Otherwise, we'd remain in the No. 2 position as the most corrupt country in Asia; worse, if we'd dislodge Indonesia from the No. 1 ranking as most corrupt in Asia.

—PROCOPIO S. BELTRAN JR.,
president, Nagmamalasakit na mga
Manananggol ng mga Manggagawang
Pilipino Inc. (Manananggol),
Rm. 236 Regina Bldg.,
Escolta, Manila

Population trivia

1. FIRST world countries today rely on immigrants for their workforce. Because of their population control programs, they are now in a situation where they have more old people (than young ones) to support.

2. In Singapore, the government is giving a lot of incentives for couples to have more children. The government is having a hard time reversing the birth control mentality. Their women don't want to be pregnant anymore.

3. The problem the world faces today is not really population explosion. The population, especially in Western countries, is decreasing. It is said that if all people in the world were to live in Luzon, the density would be same as what Manila has now.

3. Population control is an economic problem, not the direct (not even indirect) solution to poverty. The government ought to provide for people—prioritize literacy and education of its citizens, create policies to help enhance culture and discipline, and seek means to generate more jobs so that its citizens can support their dependents. The government should not forget that an economy's greatest asset is its human resources. First World countries are First World because they have exceptionally cultured and disciplined citizens that know how to work very hard.

4. Selling contraceptives is a very profitable business.

5. Graft and corruption in the government is the more likely cause of poverty in the nation. (Survey says) The Philippines is the second most corrupt country in Southeast Asia.

6. Nations progress depending on the sincerity and honesty of their leaders. Poverty in the Philippines is therefore not a population problem but a moral one.

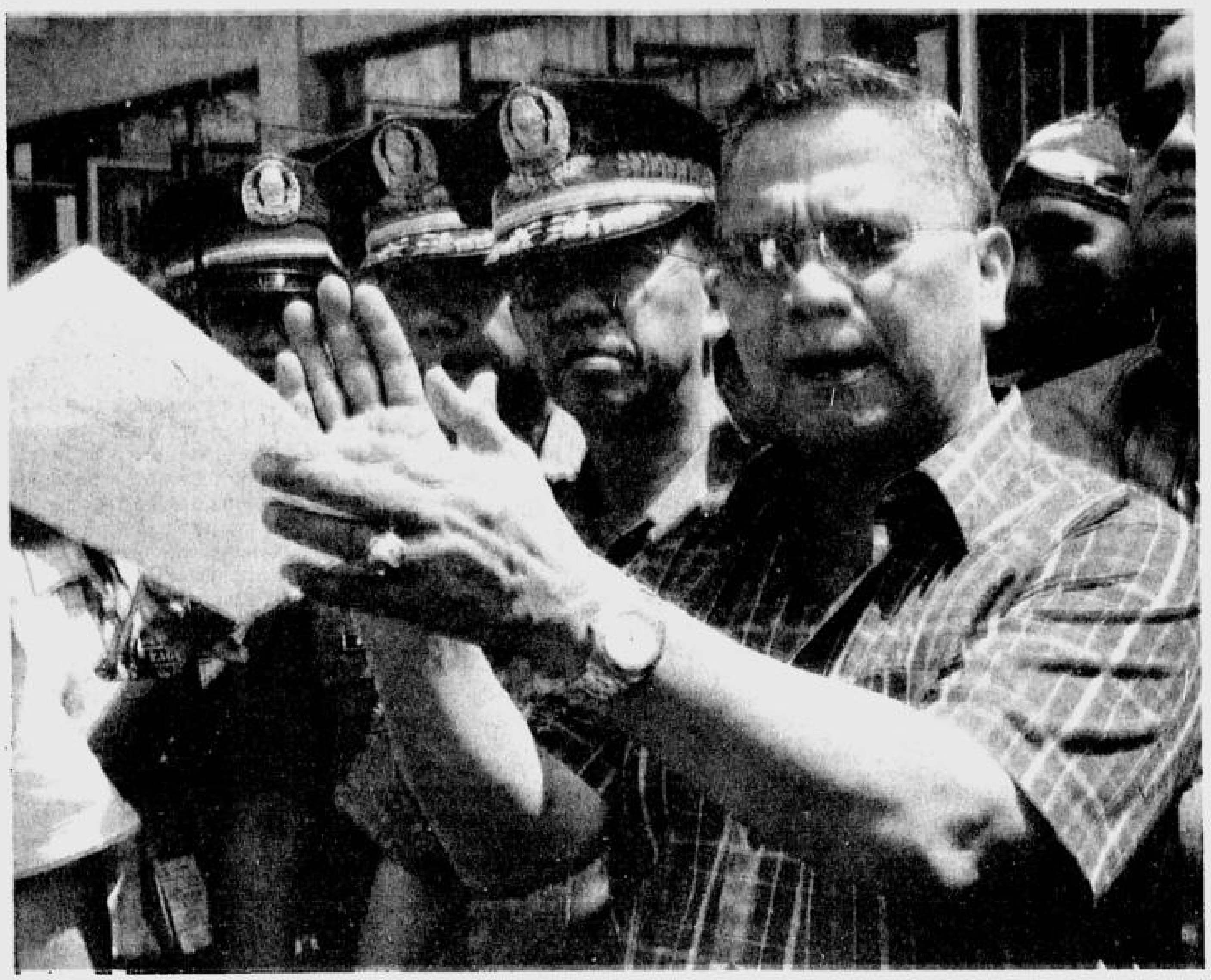
7. People marry not only to live together but to build a family. If this is forgotten, couples will become selfish. Selfish people never know how to genuinely give—and love. People who do not know how to give to each other end up separating. The family is destroyed. When the family is destroyed, so will the nation.

8. All countries that have implemented birth control policies ended up, at least, legalizing divorce. The majority proceeded to the death trap, legalizing abortion, same-sex marriage, etc.

9. The bill on population control is against the Constitution, but it is so well worded in vague logic that pro-family legislators have difficulty refuting it.

10. High-density population often result to poor health conditions. Density is the problem, not the size of the population. It is the task of the government to solve such problems such as the congestion in Metro Manila.

—MANUEL FELIX G. ABEJO JR.,
17 Engineering St., SSSNFH, North
Fairview, 1121 Quezon City



Secretary Reyes: after the assault comes the investigation.

Unfair to DILG chief

YOUR editorial of March 17, though well-intentioned, was unfair and unkind to Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes.

Anybody who followed the police assault on Camp Bagong Diwa on TV and radio last March 15 clearly saw that Reyes directed the operation with consummate skill and precision, borne of his experience as a soldier who had become the Armed Forces chief of staff and also as a former defense secretary.

That many lives were lost, mostly among the detainees, is unfortunate. However, it could not have been helped if the rule of law was to be maintained. It is a testament to the competence of Reyes as the man in charge that only one policeman died in the assault.

President Macapagal-Arroyo was right in ordering Reyes to conduct an investigation of the incident. He is a man known for his fairness, objectivity and integrity.

We should expect that the public and the media should await the results of the investigation before making any judgment as to who could be held ultimately responsible. We should also wait for the recommendations that would be made before making any further conclusions.

After all, fairness and objectivity are among the ethical criteria of responsible journalism. We expect the leading newspaper in our country to adhere to these principles.

—FLORENTINA RAMIRO,
5 Wilson St., San Francisco del Monte,
Quezon City

Off-balance on religion

I AM one of the admirers of Conrad de Quiros and I read his columns regularly. It does not mean that I agree with everything he writes, but I like the way he argues and present his views.

But one thing I noticed is that when it comes to religious or church matters, he seems to lose his balance. Is it because of personal experience or training, or simply for lack of information or deeper reflection?

Lots of Filipinos are of similar mindframe. They blame the Catholic Church for problems beyond its influence, like poverty in the Philippines. The same problem bedevils other countries, and they are not necessarily Catholic. It would be interesting to study the effects or influence of the dominant religion on a nation's morality. I am sure De Quiros will be very surprised by the findings.

De Quiros keeps on saying that democracy has not been truly practiced in the Philippines. In the same vein, Catholicism or Christianity is practiced skin-deep in the Philippines—just like the way Buddhism or certain religions are practiced in other countries. A question: Who should show the way in practicing religion? The leaders or the followers? How? I hope De Quiros finds time to share his thoughts on this. He is great.

—RON GREENSTAG,
willowgreenbee@yahoo.com

SSS loan processing at normal pace

THIS is in reference to a column of Honesto General (PDI, 4/06/05) on the Social Security System computer system which, he said, has "broken down," for which reason the processing of applications for loans and benefits is "crawling at a snail's pace."

The column is inaccurate. There was no breakdown in the SSS' computer system as General alleged. The processing time of loan and benefit applications is moving at a normal pace. All our offices have been meeting the standard processing time.

However, some SSS services have been suspended due to a power cut-off at our Business Recovery Center (BRC), one of the SSS' major computer hubs, in the Aurora Milestone Building on Aurora Boulevard in Quezon City. The SSS has filed charges in court against the owner of the building for causing the power outage.

The suspended services are Text SSS, on-line verification system and the capture of personal data for the biometric ID.

The electricity supply was restored on April 5 on orders of Regional Trial Court Judge Bayani Vargas of Branch 219 in Quezon City. The suspended SSS services will be resumed by the end of the week.

—JOEL P. PALACIOS,
assistant vice president,
Media Affairs Department,
Social Security System, East Avenue,
Diliman, Quezon City

Media have crucial role protecting freedom

THE FOODFIRST Information and Action Network-Philippines strongly condemns the persons who masterminded the killing of Marlene Esperat and other members of the media. We urge the police to thoroughly investigate the cases and arrest the killers.

Members of the mass media have a crucial role to play in protecting and promoting human rights. Through their exposés in the papers, radio and television, the people become aware of the corruption and irregularities being committed by government officials. Without these exposés, the people will not have a basis in demanding the ouster and punishment of corrupt officials.

We hail Esperat and other members of the mass media who promote the people's right to information and courageously defend their right to good governance.

—RAFFY RAY HIPOLITO,
policy advocacy officer,
FoodFirst Information and Action
Network-Philippines, 2149-B Fidel A.
Reyes St., Malate, Manila

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

INBOX

Are you confident that GMA will be able to solve our fiscal crisis?

Pres. GMA is doing her best to solve our financial problem. But we, the people including political opposition, shud help her. She can't do it alone.
—Juan Deveraturda, *Subic, Zambales*

Yes am confident that she will be solve our fiscal crisis. she is an economist. She knows how to deal with it
—Felix Mojica, *Sipalay*

yes if she break her promise to accommodate her political debt...
—Noel Madrid, *bulacan*

i dont think so! kc maski na ano ang gawin nya, hindi parin uunlad ang ating bayan dahil sa corruption sa ating pamahalaan
—Katherine Marte, *Bacolod City*

What counts is d will of d president 2 solve d crisis & d kind of support she gets frm legislators & d cooperation of people
—Danny Sy, *Santiago City*

i am confident that the president can solve our fiscal crises, only that there are some people who refuse to believe
—dan ballener, *iloilo*

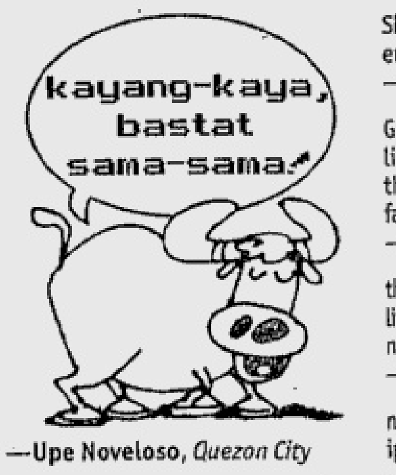
yes, confident enaf dat Gma can solve d fiscal crisis.. in my dream.
—roditha sumagaysay, *victorias city*

I am confident that GMA can formulate effective prescriptions to solve the fiscal sickness... VAT pill...?!
—Nicholas Vergara, *Negros Oriental*

we have no other choice but 2 believe, in d 1st place, trust is our last option.
—pepito capili, *davao city*

in her mind! wala na yatang pag-asa ang Pinas!
—Joel Quintela, *Tagum City*

Of course, I have put my entire trust on her to make a difference, when i wrote her name on my ballot.



kayang-kaya, bastat sama-sama.

—Upe Noveloso, *Quezon City*

no...do i need to write more? :-(
—Edwina S. Meily, *Quezon City*

she can't solve it na 'no! Wala kc matino na tumutulong. Saksak sa likod nya mga cabinet nya! Dkit kung mkakakupit! No hope.
—mary jox soria, *digos city*

"YES". By having a concrete domestic economic policy and stand for the protection of our sovereignty free
—Greg Saraos, *Intramuros, Manila*

She can, but she needs our cooperation.
—Cristina Naguit, *Makati*

Gma is a denial queen & people like her don't get to solve anything bec they are incapable of facing the truth.
—trudis sapitan, *malolos, bulacan*

the gov't lacks not resources, but political will! In dis troubled times, we need 2 show empathy, not apathy.
—simon Ibarra, *qc*

not GMA alone, but the entire Filipino could.
—afredo m. Camacho, *cagayan de oro*

How do you cope with the current high cost of living?

i cut corners wherever & wenever i can. magtiis mamaluktot habang maikli ang kumot, wika nga.
—Vivencita R. Togle, *Cainta*

shift to a simpler lifestyle. Avoid unnecessary spending. Make saving a habit.
—Robert Lee Maslian, *Antipolo*

instead of going out on weekends, i stay at home. I buy cheap goods but quality-made.
—Rio P. Juntereal, *Infanta, Quezon*

mag one-day one eat nalang! Dati nang high, ang cost of living, ang low is sweldo! Di balanced ang demand sa supply kc tgo more
—mary jox soria, *digos city*

pancit canton-P5.70, water, gas stove and LPG tank. Or fried egg w rice. A meal that costs more or less P20.
—Mary Ann Sanchez, *Calamba City*

4 me i can cope wid the high cost of living by not being so much magastos. if its not really needed, don't buy it.
—marilyn verzosa, *marikina city*

Be a wise spender by avoiding d buying of unnecessary things, stay home durng wkends n minimize dining on restaurants if possible
—Theresa Taganile, *Bacolod*

Practice extreme austerity and make use of what you already have.
—Melchizedek E. Manalo, *Quezon City*

Live a simple, not a complicated and luxurious life.
—Calito Malazarte, *Iloilo City*

Make it a habit to always reuse, reduce and recycle.
—Cristina Naguit, *Makati*

By making the most out of the little that I have, keeping track, living simply, plus continual prayer—it works! Ü
—X, *san pedro*

Dear Readers, Text us your comments, suggestions and views on today's news or how it was delivered. Tell us about the news you are interested in and the things you want improved in your favorite newspaper. Text INQUIRER <section keyword> name/city/message and send to 283 (Smart) or 2207 (Globe). The section keywords are indicated in the logo of each section.

MADAME PRESIDENT: GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO

We ask that you enforce your EO 272 that you signed in January 2004. EO 272 authorizes the creation of the Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC) and the transfer of the Community Mortgage Program and the Abot Kaya Pabahay Program from NHMFC to SHFC.

It is not fair that the hard earned loan repayments of the urban poor are used for NHMFC's salaries, bonuses, etc. instead of providing new CMP loans for urban poor communities.

We wait for the fulfillment of your commitment.

FR. NOEL VASQUEZ, SJ
Ateneo de Manila

FR. JOEL TABORA, SJ
Ateneo de Naga

T. R. Osmeña
TOMAS R. OSMENA
Mayor, Cebu City

REP. RAUL V. DEL MAR
Cebu City, 1st District

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Bishops-Businessmen's Conference

HALEY ATIENZA
Urban Poor Colloquium

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Natl Urban Poor Council
NAPC (Mindanao)

Mary Lou B. Caharian
MARY LOU B. CAHARIAN
Rep. - NAPC Women Sector

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Iloilo Caucus of Devt NGO

MA. PATRICIA M. SARENAS
Mothers' for Peace Movement

ELIZABETH YANG
PILIPINA / NPC

EDGARDO LABELLA
Cebu City Councilor

REV EDWIN LARIZA
Iloilo Coalition of NGOs & POs

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JOEY DALUZ
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Cebu City Councilor

JUN PE
Cebu City Councilor

EDWIN JAGMOC
Cebu City Councilor

RAUL ALCOSEBA
Cebu City Councilor

PAX PACANA
Cebu City Councilor

NESTOR ARCHIVAL
Cebu City Councilor

ARCHT. LUIS M. FERRER
Bishops-Businessmen's Conference
(Co-chair, Cluster on Social Services)

POS: Luzon - ***Quezon City*** - BH-SIKAP. BH-SAMASA . KONSTI-A . KONSTI-B . KONSTI-C . KONSTI-E . ULRHA . SAMASA HOA-SUSON . SAMASA HOA-SANTIAGO . IGNACIO . AREA B-1 TALANAY HOA . TALANAY . DAMAZA . BALIKATAN SA DOS . SKRK . G2 HOA FEDERATION . SANDIG HOAs Phases 1-8 & 13. UNO HOA . BIGKIS DIWA . MOLAVE . CULIAT INC, . PCUPA . ST. NIÑO HOA. KAPIT-BISIG HOAs (Banawa, Jacinto, Pena, De Guzman, Padilla, LCM, Tan, Carlo Properties).ENGR. ALFONSO D. GOSECO COMPOUND HOA, INC.G.H. ALDANA COMPOUND HOA, INC. KAAKIBAT NG KABALIKAT I & II HOA. KAAKBAY. HRS. BAGONG PAG-ASA. SILANGAN VILLE. OUR LADY OF GRACE. LIWANAG. SAM. MGKAKAPITBAHAY NG FLORENTINA. CONSUELO. CRISPULO. SAM. MGKAKAPITBHAY NG BIGASAN Phase 1 & 2. SAM. MARALITA NG GULOD. PADILLA CMPD. HALIGI AT ILAW. EDNA ALVAREZ HOA. NENITA VILLE. LUZVIMINDA. STA. LUZVIMINDA. SAM. MARALITA NG KABAGONG TAUHAN. NGKAKAISANG MGKAKAPITBAHAY NG DABAGONG TAUHAN. SAM. MGKAKAPITBAHAY NG KADALAGAHAN. DON CRISPULO. NABIGLA PO KASAM PO Phase 1 & 2. DELLAMAS. PASACOLA MEN IN ACTION. DELA ROSA HOA. UPPER EVERLASTING. SUNSHINE. LITEX BLK.1. SAMAHAN HOA. SAMALI. SAMPAKABAI. KALINISAN LIKOD COA. KAPITBISIG. SOHNA. PINAGBUKLOD. KOSA. GALLY HOA. BLESSED LAND. MAGKAISA HOA. VINE HOA. PINAGSAMA. LUPANG PANGAKO. BALIKATAN. NSLE VILLAMARZO, FEDHOPW, GOLDEN SHOWER. PGKAKAISA NEIGHBORHOOD. PAMANA. EDGE HOA. VILLAMARZO HOA. SANAPA FED. BUKLURAN. UNITED HOA. PATIBAY BLKS. 1 - 3. NAMAPA BLKA 1-3. POPAVILLE. STAR HOA. . ***Muntinlupa*** - SAM. MAGKAKAPITBAHAY PHASE 4. DAMAR 3. SMTR. BAGONG SIBOL PNR. LUZVIMINDA NEIGHBORRHOOD ASSN. LASAMMI. MORNING SITE HOMES. APAYA SETTERS. SPARINA RIVERSIDE. NAMASU. NMTB. NINACERES HOA. ASONG MAKIPOT. SAPISSAN. SIKAP BULI. SITIO MASAGANA. SNK KABABASHAN. SITIO PARAISO. SN. LEONARDOS. SOUND OF TRUTH NEIGHBORHOOD. SAM. NG PAGKAKAISA NG TAGA SAMPAGUITA. SAM. MARALITA. SMSP ICAMPINA. BAGONG SILANG HOA. SITIO MAPALAD FARMERS NEIGHBORHOOD. SAM. MAHIHIRAP MAGDAMAG. TRUE NEIGHBORHOOD. SNV TRAMO. SITIO ANAHAW. MJBV PNR RAILROAD. SMSNWCI. KASAMMI. PHOAI. SMBNUSS. KABALIKAT NG BAGONG SAM. ANAK D4 CLUSTER ASSN. PMHAI SOLDIER ASSN. PUROK 7 B. PUROK 2 MALAGANAP. BUKAL HOA. SAMASA ASSN. KKKTHOA. MALAYANG SAMAHANG MAGKAKAPITBAHAY. SAMASIM. SAM. SARILING SIKAP. CENTRUM ASSN. MAAGAP NA SAMAHAN NG TRAMO. SAM. KAPATIRAN SIKAP. LOSAN-TUNASAN. BAGONG PAGASA NEIGHBORHOOD. SAM. PAGKAKAISA. SIKAP UNLAD SA RILES. PUTATAN. PACWOOD SITE. LUDURA TRAMO. SAMAKA BAYAN. SPTMMMNAI. SAPAKA. SITIO PAGASA. GALLO KAPISIN. ***Las Pinas*** - CHRISTIAN WOMEN HOA.. EVERLASTING HOMES. CHRIST THE KING Phases 1 & 2. SMM. HVNA. FREE VILLE. SP HOA. DIAMOND VILLE. ST. VINCENT VILLAGE. ALDHAI VILLA PANGARAP. STARLIGHT VILLE. KK HOAI VELAZQUEZ CMPD. STA. RITA. MORNING BREEZE. DOVE VILLE.STA. GUADALUPE. SWALLOW VILLE. KPI. GTA TALON UNO. PSBP 3. PEGION VILLE. ALMANZA VILLE. SN. ROQUE HOMES. VILLA STO. CRISTO. ST. JUDE. PATRIOTS VILLE. SILVER VILLE. UH HOA. HAPPY HOMES. STO. NINO HOMES. CYPRES VILLE. STA.GUADALUPE. DAMAYAN. EMHAE. GRACIOUS. LARKS VILLE. LUCKY HOMES. UNICARE. SAMATAHAI. GOLDEN ACRES. GLORIOUS. SAVIOUR VILLE. GOOD SHEPHERD. ST. LOUIE VILLE 1. ST. MARK.. ***M.arikina*** - DAMAYAN MARALITA NG CONCEPCION. APITONG NAI. TABING ILOG. SAN MIGUEL P2 -4, VICTORY HILLS. CHAMPACA NAI. FAR EAST. SANTAN. 1ST AVE. DUPLEX. SANCHES CMPD. BALAGTAS. PRINTING VILLAGE. SANTAN I & 5. ***Parañaque***- SAGRADA PAMILYA HOA . BLK. III BAGONG SILANG HOA, INC. PHASE ISAM. NAGKAKAISA NG PUROK DOS, INC.VELARDE HOA, INC. SMB . ***Pasig*** - VILLARAN HOA. RIVERVILLE HOA. MASIKAP HOA. KAPATIRANG MAHIHIRAP NG PASIG.KATUPARAN HOA.SAMALUPA . ***Navotas***- NAGKAKAISANG SAM. NG LITTLE SAMAR. SAMABANAN. SANAGMANA. SAM.KAPIT-BISIG NAZARENO. BUKOLD DIWA. LOURDES MARKET TENANTS ASSN. LUPA. NBBN NEIGHBORBOOD ASSN.***Valenzuela*** - MACODA. BON BON BISIG PAGKAKAISA HOA. T.C. ENCARNACION HOA. SAM. BAGONG LAKAS. JACINTO RIVERSIDE NAI. 5106 Ugong Sulok NAI. SAM. MARALITANG NANINIRAHAN SA RIVERSIDE BRGY. UGONG, SAM. KABUHAYAN SA-MAPULANG LUPA. GERMANT HOA. 3rd SAPIKA. SPSK . ***Caloocan*** - SANAMA NG PNB. SAM. MAHIHIRAP SA PNR MEDINA HOA.PAMAYANANG SAM. NG MGA MAHIHIRAP NA WALANG LUPA. SAM. MAGKAKAPITBAHAY NG LIBIS SA KALOOKAN. SAM. MAGKAKAPITBAHAY NG SUKABAN HOA. NEIGBORHOOD ASS. OF BRGY. 121 CALOOCAN. BLESSED. NEWLY FRIENDS. PEASANT. GOODHANDS. LORENZO. LIGHT HOUSE. KAPIT-BISIG. HAMPTON. PACANA. BAHAI. SAM. MAGKAKAPITBAHAY. DE VILLARIN. SABACK. SAMBAYANIHAN PEOPLE'S. NEW LOVELY NEIGHBORHOOD. CATTLEYAVILLE. PETSBAR. KING OF MERCY. JIARH HOUSE HOA. GOLDEN HOMES. LA SUERTE. LUCKYVILLE KAMASAKA FED. BUMACA FED. . ***Malabon*** - SAMAKAPA. DAMATAL Phases 1 & 2.KSHC. PCHR. STKKC. SML. SAPADACA. GREEN MEADOW. MPV HOA 1. NADHAI. CATMON HOA. BONAFIDE NAI. KNA. SISA TENANT ASSN. SMP FLOVI Home 1 & 2 . ***Pasay*** - MALIBAY ESTATE PORTION ASSN.. ***Taguig*** - TANYAG HOA, INC. PHASE I & 2. ***Taytay, Rizal*** - PHOPHECY VILLE HOA . SANAHUBA. SAM. PARA SA KINABUKASAN. . ***Antipolo*** - PAYONG HTS. GOOD SHEPHERD. SN. AGUSTIN . ***Cainta, Rizal*** - JANSSENVILLE . ***Bacoor, Cavite*** - BAYANIHAN HOA . ILAYA-SALINAS HOA . AN-CRIS HOA . SALINASVILLE 1 HOA . SALINASVILLE 2 HOA . SALINASVILLE 3 HOA. SAMASA HOA. BLK. III BAGONG SILANG HOA PHASE 1 & 2. SAM. PINAGISA NG MALIKSI II HOA..GREEN GRACES HOA. GAWARAN EXR. HOA. BSMB BLK.3-A. SAMASA HOA. ADORESVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD.. ***Kawit, Cavite*** - JOSHUA VILLAGE HOA. ***San Pedro, Laguna*** - MANGGAHAN HILLS HOA. ***Tayabas, Quezon*** - BUK. MAGKAKAPITBAHAY NG BRGY. LITA HOA.ANAK MARALITA HOA. LITA HOA. ***Tagkawayan, Quezon*** - SN RAFAEL RIVERSIDE HOA. SN JOSE ILAYA HOA. ***Cabanatuan City*** - HOME & LOT KAPITBAHAYAN ASSN. ***Baler, Aurora*** - CEMENTO HOA. ***Nueva Ecija*** - LAARVILLE HOA. GEN. TINIO HOA. .***Marilao, Bulacan*** - SAMARIMA. MARIMEL-DULO. MARIMEL SUBD. PORENZA HOA. PNHAI. LOMA DE GATO. ***Sn. Jose del Monte, Bulacan*** - GAYA-GAYA. VILLA SN. JOSE. CAPILI CMPD. PAG-AWANG MAMUHAY ASSN. PRENZA I. . .***Tarlac*** - BAGONG PAG-ASA NG TARLAC HOA... . ***Tabaco City, Albay*** - BATA PNR HOA . STO. KRISTO HOAI . DIVINO ROSTRO HOA . SAN LORENZO. BACOLOD-TAYHI PNR, HOA. SALVACIO PNR HOA. ***Legaspi City***- 1728 HOA QUIRIOCA HOA.QUINALE HOA. BRGY. 33 HOA. LOOBAN HOA. CAPANTAWAN HOA. PIGCALE HOA. BITANO HOA. PEÑARANDA HOA. CALLE HOA. ***Daraga City*** - RAWIS HOA. BINITAYAN 1 & 2 HOA. **Visayas**- ***Cebu City***- TIERRA DULCE FED. PFI FED OF CMP HOAs. CCUPCC. PROJ ROI, PROJ JOSHUA, UKRAI ASSN. 1, BALANGKAPUNA 1-3. JURACHO. WHITE HILLS. MOUNTAIN VIEW VILLAGE. SVHOA-BULACAO. JOHAI. SIBUHAI. SAPURAI. BHAI. LOVE MOUNTAIN HOA. VIHORA. DELA MONTAÑA. UKRAI 2. SITIO ANAGAN HOA. LISDOM HOA. MABUHAY HOA. GLOBAHAI. MEDALLE LAND. CNAI. ALUMNOS. CEBU ROCKY HILLS. LASNAI. HILLSVIEW VILLAGE. MOHON TISA RESIDENTS ASSN. TISA RIVERSIDE II. TISA CADULOY. LAHING-LAHING NEIGHBORHOOD. BATCH 1 TABAYLAWAN. ARRIOLA. SIRRA. BARRA. URWA. KASATRES. SINAHAI. LOT 1433. UNITED LUMAR. PEOPLE'S POWER. KINASANG-AN. KAUSWAGAN. HKKI. YELLOWBELLS. ST. ANTHONY. BATCH 17. BASAK BROTHERHOOD. VIEW HILLS. GREENBELT SITE UNITED COMMUNITY ASSN. KAWAYAN. BAJANLA 1. SUCUMNEAS. UBCA 3. BIHAI. ST. MARY HOA. ISKP. MINHOA. HILL CAMP. SITIO IPIL-IPIL. SITIO CROSSING. APAC. SITIO TAHNA TISA. VECHAI. CEBA. SURAN. HABITAT BLESSVILLE. SAN ISIDRO LABRADOR HOA. DRIHOA. ASUPA. DINA (PLASTMER, CHICAGO, BUL, PANAGHIUSA, SAN PEDRO, BOHOL, RIVERSIDE, VP). INAI. SIVIKAI. IBHOA. CHAI. EMSHOA. STO. NIÑO. LOCAHOA. URHA. BULI. SANICO. ABRA. PASTICAN. G. VILLALON. BICANAI. URBANVILLE NAI. AREOLA. PKGG HOA. SISARO. STO. ROSARIO. MAKAI. GRP. OF WOMEN OF F. GOCHAN. DPSOI. BIHAI LARAY. LOWER TANA. UTRAI. MAGNARA. OBLATES OF VIRGIN MARY. CAMURESA. BHW FED. DRIHOA-LAHUG. SSROY-LAHUG. ULCACENOR-LAHUG. SIVIKRAI. SAVEFECA ST. CRUZ. IMHAI. MINHOA. LBBHOA. CEHOA. T. CARSHA. CAMAGONG. SILBUPDAI, PUROK 3. P4L KAMPUTHAW. . ***Mandaue City***- LITTLE TOKYO HOA . KAMANGGAHAN LOWER TABOK URBAN POOR, ASS., INC . ***Lilo-an***- NAGKAKAISANG KABALAYAN HOA . ***Lapu-lapu City***- *BIPANA* . *IBRSRAI* UKNA. DOCA NEIGHBORHOOD. SUPA . PACUPA . LUPA . CEBNPA . PUTLA . MPBBA . YHC . NPUPO . LDANA . BUPA . SPSBA . PAMASOL . KAMASAKA . LUHA . ALPENA . MSNA . SLUPA . SMNA . HUGPA . SIKNA . PRESUPA . SAMUPA . SAKUPA. LNUNAI . ABDOL . MAPUBA . BASKUPA . MAHOA . PATHOA . DLA . CEGUNA . FRNA . SNLPA . SKCAI . ICRAI . MSISA . MIMA . IMUPA . ***Talisay City*** - COUNTRYSIDE HOMES. CANEBA HOA. SARIHAI. SITIO MINGGOY. ***Toledo City*** - HOG RAISERS ASSN. . ***Iloilo City*** - MH DEL PILAR ZONE 4. PAGBUYLOGANAY. PAGHILIUGYON SANG PUMULUYO. PAG-ASA JEREOS. PAGHILIUSA. GOLDEN VALLEY. KAAYUHAN. OÑATE NAI. CAMP DELGADO VILLAGERS. HAPPYNEST. PALI. PUNONG. ROSARIO VILLAGE. TAYTAY. URBAN FAMILY. BITOON. GUSTILO. PEOPLE'S VICTORY. MAPAINUBUSON. PACIFIC VILLE. BAKHAW. BERMUDA VILLE. KALAYAAN. BAYANIHAN• FLORES. SUMAMA . ***Bacolod City*** - MORE. MAGAYON NAI. HAPPYVILLE HOPE IN SUM-AG. PUROK 2, PTA TAYTAY NAI. PASKU BRGY 3. PAGDAMGO SA KAUSWAGAN SA GREENFIELD . CLAMVILLE. GREENFIELDS. PAGBINULIGAY SA KADALAG-AN. USWAG LOVE. LOVE. TUPAD. ***Roxas City*** - STO NIÑO NEW ROAD. SITIO PANGPANG. BRGY. BANICA. BRGY. CULAJAO. GOLDEN VILLAGE. MERCEDES PANGANIBAN. MEDALLA MILAGROSA. SAN JUAN LONOY. MONGPONG. PAG-ASA. PAG-ASA MILIBILI. BRGY. BAYBAY PHASE 1 & 2. BRGY. LUNOY. RAMON DINGLASAN ESTATE. TIZA REFORM. DOÑA LOLITA. LAWAAN HILLS. SALUGNON. SITIO UBOS. BANQUILING TIZA. BANICA-HOPE VILLAGE. ACHIEVERS. ***Calbayog City*** - CCCUPA. SANCHOA 1 & 2. MACHOA. EAHCA. SVPHCAI. CDACA. KUPO. CAFA. DUPRA. SAM. MARILAG. PAGHIUSA . ***Ragbilaran, Bohol*** - TUVAL CUNA. CAPITOL HOA .***Kabankalan City*** - UNICA. RISING VILLAGE. COUNTRYSIDE. LIBERTY . KABANKALAN CHRISTIAN PARENTS.. ***Silay City*** - LANTAD UNITED PEOPLE'S. CABAY UNITED PEOPLE'S. LONEY-BURGOS. MAMBULAC. PUROK MALINONG NAI. ALPHA. SS. WEST SAMAR. STO NIÑO COMMUNITY. SANCHOA 2. FAMILY HOA **Mindanao** - ***Davao City*** - HUGPONG HOA, KAR ASIA, CHARITY HOA. MUSLIM & CHRISTIAN CREDIT, TANSODAI ASSN. PANGARAP ASSN. YHA. DONA MERCEDES 1. TRNSHAI. AKKMI. DRHAI. STO. NINO SETTLERS. URESA. KELIA VILLAGE., NSDSSAI. MEGAVILLE. COASTAL VILLAGE. GHCE. MANANAMA 2. LOHOA. SANASA. PHABI. KIHOA 2. CABUPHOA 3. GASAI. VGHOAI. BHOAI. SIHAI. SAPAHA KM.12 Phase 1 & 3, CHOA. PEBHOA GARCIA HTS. CREDIT COOP. FATIMA VILLAGE. DE MESA HOA. APSCOOP. GHICCAI. KM3 HOA. SURAYA Phases 1-2. STO. NINO SETTLERS. GREEN VALLEY. PHIL BANKINGBAKAKA GHIA. GREEN HIGHLANDS. . ***Davao Norte*** - SACRED HEART HOA Phases 1-5. SN. JOSE HOA. SN. ANTONIO HOA. SN. RAFAEL HOA. ORVILLE HOA. VILLA RICA GARCIA HOA. . ***Davao del Sur*** - APO BEACH Phases 2-3. ***Tagum City*** - GREENLAND HOA .***Cagayan de Oro City***- NHA,INC -Brgy 18 . LKVHA . POO, HOA . ACLCA . PUPNA . KSMR . MHCAI . DNHA . SABINA, HOA . ZONE 7, HOA . ZONE 1, HOA . LEYO . AKLAS SLYO HOA . JONG HOA . LELAS . DPPT . GROUPSHA . ***Iligan City*** - SAN ROQUE HOA. STO. NIÑO HOA. PHASE 6 HOPE FOR CHANGE. . ***Zamboanga City*** - SAN LORENZO RUIZ URBAN POOR. BALIWASAN CHICO. VCHOAI

Religious groups* : Luzon**- DIOCESE OF MALOLOS. GOOD SHEPHERDS SISTERS-NCR. . **Visayas** - SOCIAL ACTION CENTER -ORMOC. COUPLE'S FOR CHRIST-Bacolod . STO. NIÑO II CHAPEL ORG . OASIS OF LOVE -CEBU CHAPTER. SOCIAL ACTION ACENTER- DIOCESE OF TAGBILARAN . **Mindanao** - DIOCESE OF DAVAO. GOOD SHEPHERS SISTERS-ILIGAN.. ***Academic organizations- Luzon- ATENEO DE MANILA. ATENEO DE NAGA. ***Visayas***- UP CEBU . GOTHONG NAT'L HIGH SCHOOL-BACOLOD CITY . USJR. ***Government organizations***- BRGY. TAGAS, DATAGA. CEBU CITY. URBAN POOR AFFAIRS OFFICE - MUNTINLUPA. CITY PLANNING. CCUD-CALBAYOG

NGOS: Luzon- FDUP. FDA. CCAD. MDF. FEEDER. TSMFI. KRISTONG HARI. ICSI. SALIGAN. UP A, CO-MULTIVERSITY, COPE. TAO-PILIPINAS. ALTERPLAN PAKISAMA. KAISAMPALAD. INAM. KAISAHAN. KAMMPIL. TFDP. BALAY REHAB. FOLPMI. ISO. CBCP-NASSA. LCSFI . **Visayas** - PFI . IPHFI, SASCULDEF, JFLFI, WESADEF, KAUSAMAR. ALLRU . LIHOK PILIPINA . BIDEF, INC . CEBU UNITING FOR SUSTAINABLE WATER . FORGE . ALKAP . PMP SECRETARIAT . FELLOWSHIP FOR ORGANIZING ENDEAVORS . KAKASAKA FOUNDATION . PHIL. SLEF HELP FOUNDATION, INC . NEGROS ORIENTAL INTEN FAITH . DAWN ROSARY ORGANIZATIONS . KBSP . SENIOR CITIZEN ASSN. - BRGY. LUZ . KALIPO-WOMEN . 4 K'S YOUTH MOVEMENT . HELP-FIRST BASEY MULTI-PURPOSE COOP. BIDEF. **Mindanao**- HUGPONG DABAO. MINLAND. CODE. APSED. GUIDE. PEACE FDN. MPI. PACAF. GROUP. ZHRDFI. KPS. MC DONNELL FDN. MCFI. BBFI. SUP. SARAY WOMEN ASSISTANCE NETWORK. BEC / HOME DWELLERS INC. SIGRAD FDN. PILIPINA LEGAL RESOURCE CENTER. KONSUMO DABAO .

We apologize for the many other groups we have failed to acknowledge for lack of space. **CMP Congress**

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Landslide victims decry gov't failures

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—More than 400 victims of last year's landslides in Dingalan, Aurora, picketed the town hall and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources office there yesterday, demanding wood, houses and livelihood support earlier promised to them by the government.

The protesters, marching all the way from Barangay Umiray, more than 20 km south of the town proper, also demanded that they be allowed to retrieve the logs still littering the coast of the Pacific Ocean for charcoal making.

They sought a lifting of the ban on the production, sale and transport of charcoal, seeing the trade as a reprieve from untenable farming in upland and lowland fields buried by debris.

The DENR has impounded 20 trucks of charcoal.

The protesters asked local officials and the DENR to remove the checkpoints put up by the logging firm Green Circle Properties and Resources Inc. along the provincial road.

"The promises are still promises, empty up to now. Life has been more difficult after the disaster yet we don't get any help for houses and jobs from the local or national government," German Astrera, chair of the farmers' group Pinagkaisang Samahan ng Magbubukid ng Dingalan, told the INQUIRER by phone.

Arturo Francisco of the Integrated Rural Development Foundation of the Philippines, a nongovernment group working in Dingalan, said the victims have not yet received the 2,000 board feet of wood supposed to be used in rebuilding homes.

The protest came four months after the disaster killed some 300 people and left homeless almost 1,100 families. It also came more than a month since the DENR's Natural Resources Development Corp. stopped the retrieval of wood on Feb. 25.

An NRDC official said his agency had recovered 5,200 cubic meters of logs in Dingalan and 500 cm in nearby Quezon province. These were less than one-fourth of target.

The last inventory in January reported this volume: Dingalan: uprooted trees, 7,996 pieces or 8,473.14 cm, tops and branches, 90,500 cm. Quezon: uprooted trees, 13,573 pieces or 12,343 cm; tops and branches, 32,277.25 cm and flitches, 88,203 board feet.

The firm Kasibu stopped its towing services after the NRDC declined to honor the contract, the INQUIRER learned.

According to Francisco, the little that the NRDC managed to tow did not go to the victims. Some of it, he added, went to Mayor Jaime Ylarde's business in the manufacture of sticks for furniture.

Ylarde said a cooperative, not him, was benefiting from the supply. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

US soldiers come armed with Pinoy language

MALUSO, Basilan—Filipino soldiers participating in the three-week military exercises with their American counterparts here do not have to carry with them English-Filipino dictionaries anymore.

Unlike in the previous war games, US soldiers participating in the Balance Piston 05-3 could easily communicate in Filipino according to Major Robert Ball, mission commander of the Americans.

Ball said most of the 22 American trainers participating in the three-week exercises, aimed at enhancing the fighting skills of Filipino troops against terrorism, have taken up Filipino language courses back in Okinawa.

"We all [went] to school to speak Filipino," Ball said.

In previous war exercises involving US soldiers, Filipino troops said they had to "borrow" their children's Filipino-English dictionaries to translate Filipino words into English for the Americans.

"It's hard to talk with them if you have only a bagful of English," a Filipino Army sergeant once said.

Lt. Col. Abdulnasser Kasim, commander of the Army's 55th Infantry Battalion, said most of the Filipino soldiers trained by US Special Forces in 2002 had a hard time comprehending the instructions given them due to their limited English.

Kasim was then a member of the training directorate for the Balikatan 02-1.

Ball said the US military strives hard to enhance the communication capability of US soldiers deployed in South East Asia.

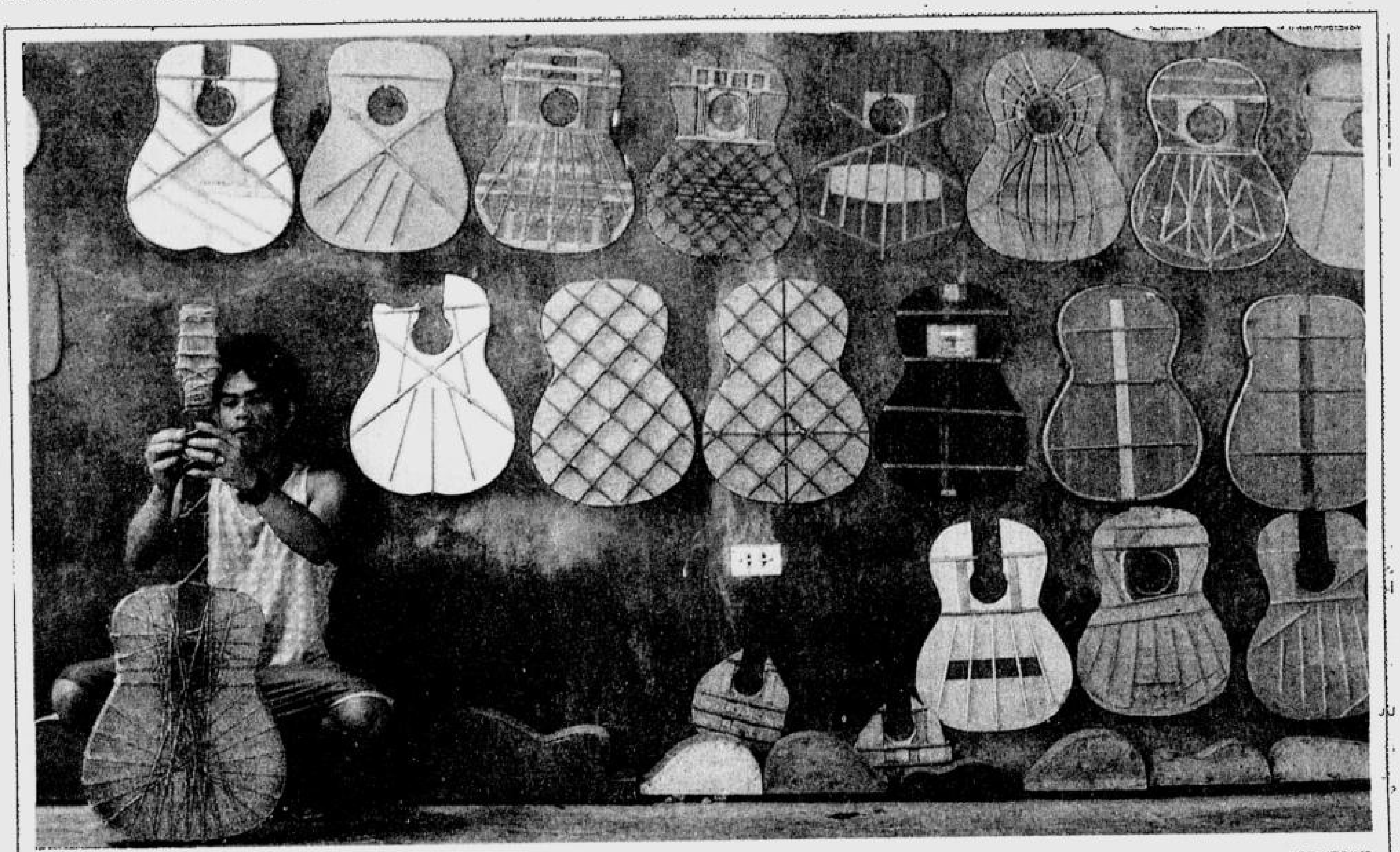
"We make sure to learn new words, new languages and it helps us with the translation," he said.

If their ability to speak in Filipino would prove to be lacking, Ball said the American soldier ensured that everything would be all right when it came to communicating with the Filipino soldiers.

He said the presence of Filipino-American soldiers like M/Sgt.. Eli de la Cruz would really help.

Ball said because Balance Piston 05-3 would only last for three weeks, the US military prepared comprehensive and easy to understand modules.

The training includes small unit tactics, rifle marksmanship and comprehensive combat life-saving procedures. *Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



JOEL NITO/AFP

STRINGS

A craftsman, surrounded by guitar boards, binds a guitar with a rope to ensure that its soundboard is glued correctly to the body at the Alegre guitar shop in Cebu City. Cebu is famed for its acoustic guitars, which are favored by local and foreign musicians.

Mayor defies Church, promotes birth control plan

By Grace Cantal-Albasin
PDI Mindanao Bureau

VALENCIA CITY—While most politicians are afraid to support women's reproductive health programs, Mayor Jose Galario Jr. is pushing for it.

Since October 2004, Galario has been on a massive information campaign on the prohibition of registration of children born after the second child beginning January 2006.

"The Church has its own policy, the LGUs (local government units), too, have their own policy. I am only after the welfare of each woman here, and the government has not been created to always give financial support to the indigents here who mostly bear many children," Galario told the INQUIRER.

Galario said women who give birth to their third child beginning January next year will have to look for another place to register their babies.

The mayor said this policy stays as long as he sits as the city's chief executive.

"The women will benefit from this policy because their reproductive organ will take some rest, thus making them healthy and be able to help their husbands to earn additional income," Galario said.

"We have autonomy. If there are people who will question this policy, then you can go to court," Galario he added.

The mayor said he was fed up entertaining "all the miseries of these [indigent] people."

But the mayor has not endorsed any birth control method. He said it would be up to the couples as long as they follow the two-children policy beginning 2006.

Bishop Honesto Pacana of the Diocese of Bukidnon remained steadfast in the Church's call to respect life and the choices of the family.

3 killed, 10 injured as jeep slams into post in Cebu City

CEBU CITY—Three persons were killed while 10 others were injured yesterday when the jeepney they were riding in rammed into an electric post after it was hit by a van along the Ayala Access Road here.

The fatalities were identified as Melchor Cataluna, 33, of Asturias town; Leonardo Vibar, 30, of Dumanjug town; and Arlene Villeta, 32, of Minglanilla town.

SPO3 Gomersendo Mandawe, traffic investigator, said that due to the impact, the three were thrown off the jeepney and their heads hit the lamp post on the center island of the road.

The 10 who were injured were brought to different hospitals in Cebu City.

Mandawe said most of the victims were construction workers who arrived at the South Bus Terminal from Cebu's southern towns and boarded the jeepney for Barangay Talamban here.

Policarpo Abad, 32 and driver of the jeepney, said he was driving on the corner of Samar Loop Street at the Ayala Access Road at about 6:15 a.m. when a van suddenly emerged from Cardinal Rosales Avenue and bumped the right side of his jeepney.

He said he tried to apply the brakes but lost control of the vehicle and it rammed into the post.

But Mandawe said Abad was over-speeding. *Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Pagasa says Baguio summer rains normal

BAGUIO CITY—The country's summer capital these days is experiencing extreme heat during mornings, rainfall in the afternoons and cold temperature at nights.

But Salvador Olinares, weather specialist of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) here, said Baguio and Benguet's weather pattern continues to be normal at this time of the year when rains are unexpected.

Olinares said there was nothing to worry about the seemingly unusual weather in the city.

Despite the extreme heat and drought accompanying the El Niño weather phenomenon this year, Baguio would still continue to experience rains because of its unique weather, he said.

"This is the unique characteristic of Baguio, it has a unpredictable weather. We may experience isolated rain showers and thunderstorms anytime of the year," he said.

He said the forest cover of the Cordillera contributes to the peculiar weather condition in Baguio, Benguet and the rest of the upland provinces.

"Aside from the southwest monsoon, frequent rains in the region can be attributed to its being a mountainous area," he said.

He said the rains benefit farmers in the region, who depend on cultivating upland vegetables and rice for their livelihood.

Olinares said with the continuing global warming, the Cordillera is still fortunate because of its remaining forest cover.

"Global warming is due to continuing urbanization, industrialization and the decreasing forest cover. So far, Baguio's [forest cover loss] is not yet in its alarming rate, that is why we have these rain showers all year round," he said. *Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Cebu docs perform Visayas' 1st kidney transplant

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Government doctors here successfully performed a kidney transplant operation at the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center (VSMMC), the first for a government hospital in the Visayas.

A 37-year-old gynecologist from VSMMC went under the knife on Saturday to donate her other kidney to her brother, a lawyer, who has been diagnosed to suffer from nephropathy, a kidney dysfunction.

The simultaneous operations were conducted by a team of ten specialists from VSMMC and consultants from the National Kidney and Transplant Institute (NKTI) that lasted at least three hours and was covered live for public viewing.

Dr. Ben Purungganan, NKTI consultant, said the 38-year-old recipient has diabetes and was suffering from renal disease that complicated his kidneys.

The recipient has been undergoing dialysis after his kidneys failed, he added.

"We have been preparing for the transplant since January. We could have done this a week earlier but we have to postpone it until this week to be very sure that everything is really set," Purungganan said.

The NKTI consultant refused to divulge the names of the donor and recipient as part of the confidentiality rule in the medical profession since no consent was sought from the siblings to have their identities published.

He also projected a low case of kidney rejection since the donor and recipient are siblings and their tissue and blood sample requirements matched.

During the operation, journalists and medical practitioners of VSMMC, were able to view the live telecast of the operation inside the hospital's conference room.

Purungganan guided the spectators on the actual procedures being undertaken by the operating team.

Dr. Alvin Roxas, a medical specialist at VSMMC, headed the operating team with two NKTI consultants.

He underwent a two-year course with NKTI before performing the historical kidney transplant procedure here.

The operation ran smoothly except at one instance when the recipient encountered bleeding in the second hour of operation but the medical team was quick to control it.

Purungganan said the success of the kidney transplant conducted in a public hospital would open opportunities for other kidney patients to avail of the resources in government hospitals.

He said the transplant and hospitalization costs P150,000 to P200,000 in private hospitals whereas in government hospitals in Manila, the procedure costs from P80,000 to P120,000.

At least three patients have been lined up for operations at VSMMC, he added.

Dr. Enrique Tenazas, a urologist, was the surgeon of the donor.

Tenazas told reporters after the operation that the procedure went well as expected.

He said with the success of the first kidney transplant operation they expect more patients to avail of the services of the public hospital.

"It does follow. VSMMC is ready and we have the capability," he said.

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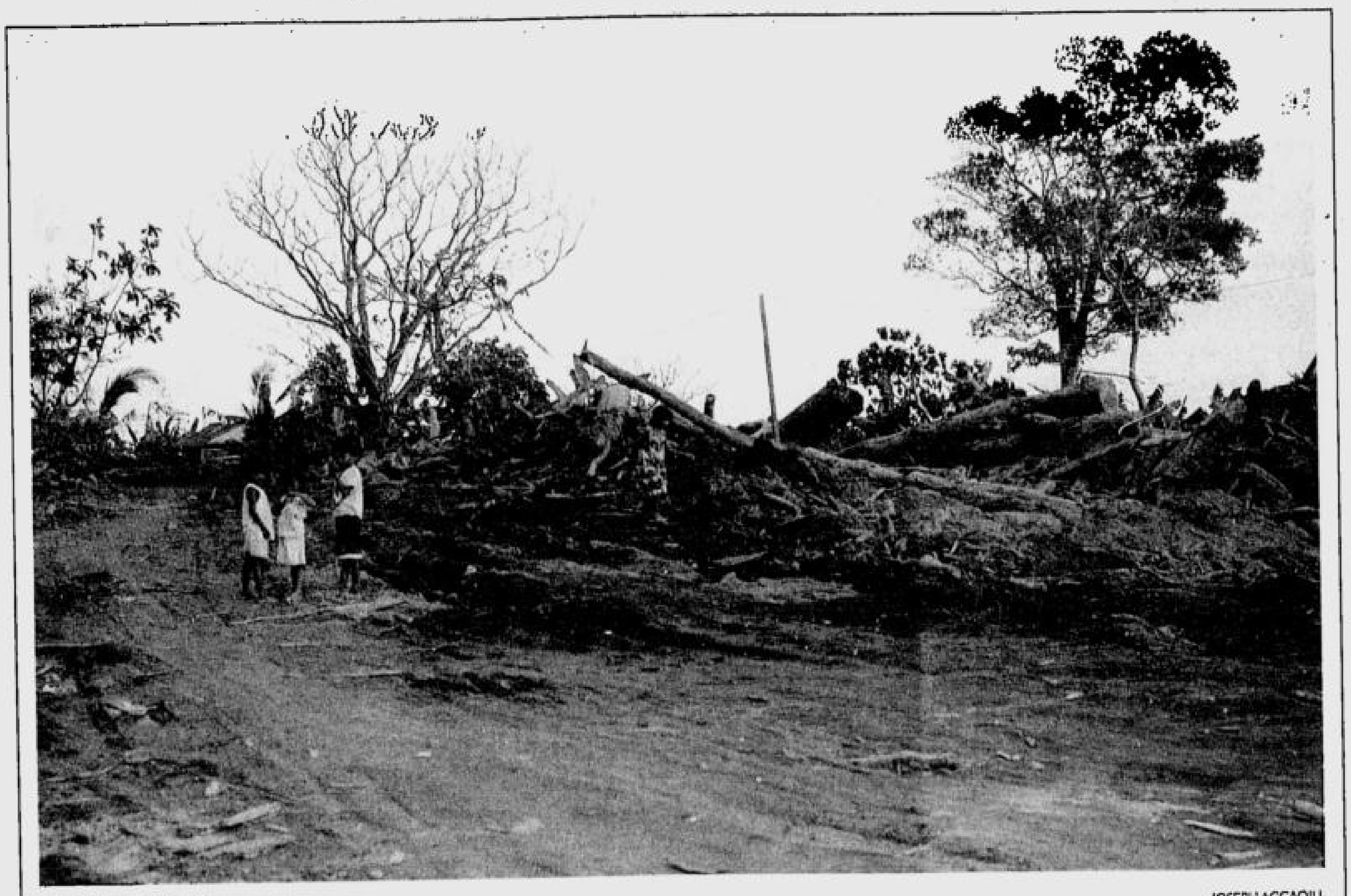


JOSEPH AGCAOILI

AFTERMATH
The town of General Nakar in Quezon is rising to its feet following the devastation wrought by typhoons and flash floods that led to thousands of logs being washed down the mountains to the villages. The town has turned tragedy into opportunity, creating sculpture and furniture out of washed out logs.

Sugar planters face bad news on ₱350-M loan

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—The chances of sugar planters in getting even a P350-million loan from the Land Bank of the Philippines for their sugar clearing house appear nil.

President Macapagal-Arroyo told a news conference on Saturday that she would prefer to fund the production of ethanol from sugar, which would address the country's need to veer away from too much dependence on imported fuel.

"If I had P350 million I would put it to fund an ethanol plant," she said.

Ms Macapagal also pointed out that some leaders in the sugar industry came to her during her last visit in Bacolod last March 2 and asked why she had to talk about the clearing house when not all of them were supporting it.

The President was in Bacolod on Saturday to monitor the prices in the public market on Burgos Street here and to attend the Panaad Festival.

During her visit on March 2, Ms Macapagal said the most Land Bank would probably be able to lend was P350 million, provided the planters were able to come up with the necessary requirements to prove their credit worthiness.

The planters had initially wanted an P8 to P12 billion loan for the clearing house to ensure stable prices for sugar, free from trader manipulation.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, a member of the Land Bank board, said the P350 million was not likely to be approved unless the sugar industry came up with some levels of financial security.

He pointed out that the Land Bank board has a fiduciary responsibility and the loan cannot be approved with no secure collateral.

"What if the market turns and they cannot pay the P350 million?" he asked.

"I hear the sugar producers want to make another proposal and we are always ready to listen to them," Yap said.

Sugar planters were wondering who could have told Ms Macapagal that not all sugar industry leaders were in favor of putting up a clearing house that would market their sugar to ensure stable millgate prices.

Manuel Lamata, president of the United Sugar Producers Federation of the Philippines, said everybody was in favor of a sugar clearing house.

He said he did not know where the President got the idea that they were not in favor of it.

"She just doesn't want to give the money, maybe they need it elsewhere, we will just have to forget government banks and go to private banks," said Lamata.

Enrique Rojas, president of the National Federation of Sugarcane Planters, confirmed Lamata's statement that all the sugar groups were in favor of the clearing house.

Reynaldo Bantug, president of the Confederation of Sugar Producers Associations, said maybe what Ms Macapagal was referring to was a single-selling arm for sugar that not all planters were agreeable with due to their experience in the past.

Single-selling of sugar was imposed by the government during the Marcos regime, which many sugar planters opposed.

"What we are working for is an industry-wide Quedan financing arm," Bantug said. "This is so planters don't have to immediately sell their produce at low prices."

Bantug said he was confident that as long as banking guidelines were followed, Quedan financing would be granted by the Land Bank and other banks.

Quedan is a document issued by a sugar mill, attesting to the amount of sugar that the producer has in the mill.

Yap said the Land Bank has been granting Quedan financing and he does not see any reason for it not to continue to do so.

ROUNDUP

4 charged with murder

TUGUEGARAO CITY—Four persons on April 13 were charged with the killing of a village chief and two others in Piat, Cagayan. Senior Supt. James Andres Melad, Cagayan police director, said Bernard Salamanca and three of his men were charged with multiple murder before the Cagayan prosecutor's office after a witness identified them as the ones who shot Warat Village captain Dominador Miguel, his wife Gloria, and sister-in-law Irene Corpuz. The victims were attacked in a sugar cane plantation in Sitio Cabaungan, Barangay Warat on April 3. Police said land dispute between Salamanca and Miguel could be the motive for the killing.

Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

2 held for robbery, murder

TUGUEGARAO CITY—Police arrested two men who allegedly robbed and killed six people in Conner, Apayao last week. Senior Supt. James Andres Melad, Cagayan police director, identified the suspects as Sonny Pacis of Pinukpuk, Kalinga, and Noli Eyawon of Conner. Melad said four survivors of the robbery identified Pacis and Eyawon as the ones who boarded their Tuguegarao City-bound van and robbed them along a highway in the boundaries of Conner, Pinukpuk and Tuao town in Cagayan on April 5. Police said the suspects seized the passengers' money and belongings and shot them as they fled.

Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Fest exec seeks support

LUCENA CITY—Noted hairstylist James Cooper, chair of the "Pasayahan sa Lucena 2005," called on local businessmen to support the annual city festival, which is held every last week of May. Cooper added that the enthusiastic response of the residents and the business sector would help ensure the success of the local government tourism program. To attract more tourists, he said, the city should adopt a unique identity and not just copy festivals in other places. Cooper said this year's festival will have a new event in the street painting contest but it will also have the traditional street dancing competition along the main city avenue.

Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Free meals

GUINOBATAN, Albay—Guinobatan folk, including villagers from other municipalities, have been enjoying free rice and chocolate porridge for almost a month now. The free meals, which will last until there is supply of rice, have helped the poor who can't afford to eat. The meals are served at the town plaza here from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., Monday to Friday and sponsored by Albay Gov. Fernando Gonzalez, Mayor Juaning Garcia and SB members.

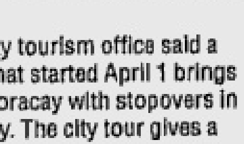
Michael Jaucian, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Solon hails graduates

PAGBILAO, Quezon—Quezon Rep. Rafael Nantes stressed to the graduates of technical schools their inherent advantage among other sectors of the country's labor force. In his speech before the 200 graduates of the Quezon National Agricultural School (QNAS) in Barangay Malicboy here, Nantes said graduates of technical schools could have easy access to jobs just like the work force in Taiwan, Korea and Japan because they are not dependent on theories. He hailed QNAS as his partner in his plan to transform Quezon as another "food basket" in Southern Tagalog.

Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Island caravan



CITY OF CALAPAN—This city has boosted the country's tourism and trade by serving, on its second year, as a gateway to the "Island Caravan: The Nautical Highway Adventure," the link between Luzon and the Visayas, through roll-on, roll-off ferries. The city tourism office said a summer travel package that started April 1 brings tourists from Manila to Boracay with stopovers in Puerto Galera and this city. The city tour gives a sight of what others call "the white mansion city hall," visits to the city plaza, Sto. Niño Cathedral, city museum and provincial museum and others, the local tourism office said.

Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Zambales mangrove forests now denuded, says environment NGO

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The shorelines of Zambales, located off the coast of the South China Sea, are mostly denuded now.

Mangroves forests in that western Central Luzon province have dwindled to 85.1 hectares from 703 hectares at least 10 years ago, a recent study by the Environmental Protection of Asia Foundation (Epaf) showed.

The remaining mangrove forests are not exempted either from "destructive human activities," according to Bruce Oliver, chair and chief executive officer of Epaf, a non-government organization.

"The establishments of fish ponds, charcoal-making and firewood gathering are but a few examples of these activities which serve to exacerbate the plight of mangroves in the area," Epaf said.

The accumulation of sand at the province's foreshore also contributed to the destruction of mangroves, Oliver said. The 1991 eruptions of Mt. Pinatubo, also straddling Zambales, spewed out sand, including ash, mud and pumice stones.

The northern town of Masinloc alone lost so much mangroves, with over 300 hectares converted into fish ponds. Only 38.3 hectares had survived the "aggressive (fish pond) development."

Oliver said Epaf is starting in November the reforestation of mangroves in at least 297.49 hectares in Sta. Cruz, Candelaria, Masinloc, Palauig, Iba, Cabangan and San Antonio towns to help local fishermen.

Species found in the area are Rhizophora apiculata (*bakawan lalake*), Avicennia alba and Avicennia officinales (*api-api*).

Various international funding agencies are supporting the five-year project through a P500-million multi-lateral grant, Oliver said.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, local governments and people's organizations are the Epaf's partners in the project.

The project aims to increase fish catch, as mangroves are habitat and spawning grounds of fishes and crustaceans. Mangroves, as storm belts, also protect coastal communities, he said.

The rapid denudation of mangroves forests in Zambales reflected a trend in the country.

Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

₱1.5-B ethanol plant to rise in Negros City

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—A P1.5 billion fuel ethanol and power plant will be operational in the second half of 2007 in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental. It will be the first in the country.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, who was in Negros Occidental Saturday with President Macapagal-Arroyo, said the production of ethanol from sugar mills provide a long term solution to the sugar industry's need for product diversification.

President Arroyo has urged the private sector to go into ethanol production to also address the country's need to veer away from too much dependence on imported fuel.

Yap said the venture is being undertaken by Bronzeoak Philippines headed by Jose Ma. Zabaleta Jr., sugar planters of the San Carlos sugar district, the National Development Corp., and a foreign investor.

The ethanol that will be sold to oil companies will be mixed with gasoline, at 5 to 10 percent ethanol per liter of gasoline. The ethanol will be sold at P28 to P30 per liter, Yap said.

Yap said he learned that Petron wants to mix ethanol with its gasoline.

San Carlos BioEnergy, a company in the process of incorporation, will build, own and operate an integrated 100,000 liter ethanol distillery and a 9-megawatt power cogeneration plant in the San Carlos Agro-Industrial Economic Zone on the eastern coast of Negros Occidental, according to Zabaleta.

Five megawatts of the power produced will be sold while 4 MW will be used for the operation of the plant, Zabaleta said.

The by-products of the ethanol will be used to produce carbon dioxide (CO2) for beverages, he said.

The distillery will process a feedstock of mixed juice from 1,500 tons of sugar cane crushed on-site and the cogeneration plant will utilize the residual bagasse as its fuel.

The plant, to be located in a duty free Export Processing Zone, will supply its fuel ethanol to the transport sector and electricity to the distribution grid, as well as produce 50 tons of CO2 per day for the beverage industry, he said.

The plant will begin construction in the first quarter of 2006 and will begin its operation in the second half of 2007.

Zabaleta said the plant would provide 200 industrial jobs to the local community.

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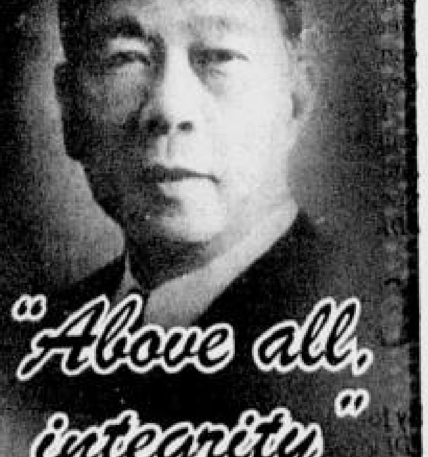

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TOIL

RAFFY LERMA

Workers carry sugarcane to a truck. The sugarcane would be refined in Barangay Gulod in Calatagan, Batangas. Sugar is the main agricultural produce in the town.

Farmers seek GMA help to stop eviction plan

SOLANA, Cagayan—At least 100 farmer-families have asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to intercede in a dispute to stop a prominent family from driving them out of a land in Barangay Maguirig here that they have been occupying for 30 years now.

The farmers, recruited in 1978 as workers and planters by the Maguirig, Solana Reforestation Project initiated by the regional office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said they have been allowed by the government to continue occupying the land.

They said the family of lawyer Victor Padilla has managed to secure certificates of title over a 375-hectare land classified as part of a forest reserve.

They said they have subsisted on the cultivation of crops in the area "without hindrance or objection from any person or government office" since the 1970s.

But Padilla, in a letter to the INQUIRER, said he bought the land from the original owner, Honesto Lasam, "knowing that it is titled, is not tenanted and not covered by the [Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program]."

Mountain

"The truth is, the subject of the petition is a rocky mountain more or less 477 hectares. It is suitable only as pastureland during the rainy season but is totally useless during the dry season," he said.

Padilla said at least 10 hectares in the area were planted by the DENR with mahogany and gmelina trees. The DENR used the area as a demonstration farm "without the permission of the [original] landowner (Lasam)," he said.

"With the growth of the trees, the DENR then allocated an annual budget for this demo farm which they called a reforestation project. Ironically, this mountain was already declared alienable and disposable in 1950 and was subjected to cadastral proceedings," he said.

Padilla said he was forced to take over the 10-hectare portion occupying the DENR demo farm when "DENR people themselves started vandalizing the area by cutting the trees allegedly for use in their project."

He said the accusation against his family was a "demolition job" instigated by a Chinese-Filipino businessman.

DENR reply

In 1999, however, Elias Seraspi Jr., then DENR Cagayan Valley director, disputed the Padillas' claim.

Seraspi said the land titles were "null and void from the beginning, because under the law, said parcels of land cannot be subject of disposition by the government" in favor of private claimants.

In his letter to the solicitor general in 1999, Seraspi said the land under question "is an established reforestation project of the government under the stewardship of the DENR and the same is within a forest zone."

Seraspi said Padilla "had entered/encroached the area and made destructive activities such as cutting of the fully grown trees, cleaning and enclosing the area with a perimeter fence to the damage and prejudice of the government because the said area is an established reforestation project of the DENR."

A memorandum issued by regional DENR director Antonio Principe to Environment Secretary Michael Defensor on Feb. 11 this year said the land was declared a forest reserve "by virtue of Proclamation No. 157 (on Feb. 13, 1967) under Republic Act 3092."

"The DENR stands firm by the proclamation that said area is a forest zone, hence, this can never be alienated, more so, be titled to private individuals neither through administrative nor judicial proceedings," Principe said. *PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Top traffic cop probed over stolen vehicles

BUTUAN CITY—The chief of the Traffic Management Group (TMG) in Caraga is under investigation for his alleged failure to immediately turn over at least two recovered stolen vehicles to their owners.

Instead of turning over the vehicles, Supt. Armenio Glodove publicly admitted he ordered his men to temporarily use these as bait against car thieves.

But Chief Supt. Ricardo Quinto, TMG national chief, said Glodove's order was illegal and he could be dismissed for it.

"That could lead to his dismissal from service," Quinto said.

The investigation against Glodove came after the recovery of an Isuzu Highlander and a Toyota Revo here about three weeks ago.

When reporters asked him for an update on the recovered vehicles, Glodove was somewhat hesitant to provide details.

Pressed about reports that the vehicles disappeared from the Repository Compound in Barangay Libertad, an obviously irked Glodove said these were being used in their "intensified" hunt against elusive car theft gangs operating in the region.

"We used them as pawns," he said.

Quinto said stolen vehicles should be immediately returned to their owners. *Franklin Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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to 2207 or 283 as their prizes will be mailed to them.

New cop slay probe sought

SENATOR Alfredo Lim said yesterday he would ask the Senate to investigate the six-month-old killing of Manila police superintendent Manolo Martinez, saying the Manila police had detained a fall guy.

According to Lim, the sole witness who implicated Jun Felizardo executed an affidavit stating that the Manila police forced him to identify Felizardo as the one who killed Martinez.

"The witness was only made to point to Felizardo. He gave the statement implicating the suspect under an assumed name," the senator said during the Kapihan sa Manila Hotel forum yesterday.

He added that the witness approached him because the latter felt guilty.

"He told me he could not sleep at night. His conscience was bothering him," Lim said.

He said the witness' assumed name was Francis Abuyawan, but his real name was Antonio Prestido.

Witness protection

Lim said he forwarded a copy of the witness' affidavit to Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and asked the latter to put Prestido in the witness protection program.

The senator said the Senate probe would probably be held this week and officials of the Western Police District would be summoned for questioning.

"Does this whole thing mean the police will point to any man... just to solve a case? This is a breach of justice," the senator said.

Lim, who said he spoke to Martinez's wife and children, said even the late policeman's family did not believe Felizardo was guilty.

Martinez was ambushed in broad daylight as he got out of his car in front of the Sta. Mesa station of the WPD on Oct. 18 last year. Two days later, Felizardo was arrested in Caloocan.

Lim said circumstances showed Felizardo was innocent. According to Lim, the suspect, a barbecue vendor, was in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan with his family when Martinez was ambushed. The Felizardos went there to collect a pair of shoes for his child.

"San Jose del Monte is very far from Manila. He couldn't have gone there to ambush Martinez," Lim said.

The senator and former Manila mayor bared attempts on Felizardo's life, probably to silence the suspect.

He said he had asked police officials to transfer Felizardo to the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (Pacer) team last year. But before the transfer could be effected, a fellow inmate tried to stab Felizardo. Fortunately, the suspect survived the attempt.

Lim said Felizardo was transferred to Bicutan, where Abu Sayyaf inmates staged a siege recently. Felizardo was slightly injured during the subsequent police assault that left 23 people dead.

Lim said, while it would be better if Felizardo were transferred to Pacer, he should actually be freed because he was innocent. *Leila B. Salaverria*

Another blaze hits fire-prone Baseco

By Margaux C. Ortiz

AN UNATTENDED gas lamp allegedly caused a fire that razed hundreds of shanties and injured a 90-year-old man in Baseco Compound, Manila, shortly after midnight yesterday.

Fire officials said the two-hour fire at Block 5, Baseco Compound, Port Area, left a thousand people homeless and destroyed P3 million worth of property.

Victim Demetrio Castillo sustained third-degree burns on his face and lower extremities, according to SFO1 Emmanuel Gaspar.

Castillo, who was bedridden at the time of the incident, was immediately taken to the Jose R. Reyes Memorial Medical Center for treatment.

According to initial investigation, the fire began at the house of Cesar Venteres around 1:56 a.m.

Venteres had rented his house to a certain Joy, who allegedly left a gas lamp unattended while cooking food.

"People should refrain from using gas lamps because these are fire hazards," Gaspar stressed.

He added that the fire spread quickly because of the light materials used in building the shanties.

The fire was put out at 3:50 p.m., the arson investigator said.

Wider roads

Gaspar said the wider roads of the new relocation area at the Baseco Compound enabled them to contain the fire immediately.

"Baseco had extremely narrow roads the last time there was a fire in this area," Gaspar said, referring to the blaze that rendered thousands of residents homeless in early January last year.

Gaspar also said a previous fire had destroyed millions worth of property in March 2002.

He explained that the materials Baseco residents use in building their shanties are often "fire hazards" like sacks, bamboo and plywood.

ELEVEN-YEAR-OLD Marjorie Faraqpina attends to four of her seven siblings inside a makeshift shelter at the Baseco Compound after a fire destroyed their home along with the shanties of other residents in the area.

REM ZAMORA

OFW center opens in Pasay City

By Leila B. Salaverria

HOPING to give overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) an edge in the labor markets and to help ease the strain on family ties created by distance, labor officials and a private firm yesterday inaugurated a facility to train OFWs in the use of computer programs and Internet-based communication tools like e-mail and chatting services.

The new Community Learning Center, housed at the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Owwa) office in Pasay City, is the product of a joint venture between the OWWA, the Department of Labor and Employment, and Microsoft Philippines.

Its purpose is to familiarize departing OFWs with computers and to teach them to use basic programs like Word, Excel and e-mail functions that are used in most offices. Those already familiar with the basics would be moved to upper-level classes.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said in a statement that the programs would not only give OFWs additional knowledge, but would also make them more marketable with their new skills.

This would give Filipinos who would go to other countries an edge over workers who are computer illiterate, she added.

Apart from the additional skills, the training would also teach OFWs to use the Internet so they could easily communicate with families they left behind in the Philippines via e-mail, chatting or even video conferencing.

Going online would allow families to do away with making the more expensive long-distance phone calls. Even if a family does not own a computer or does not have an Internet connection, there are Internet cafés where they can use computers for a reasonable fee.

"Technology empowers, and that's exactly what we will do at the Center for our OFWs," Owwa Administrator Marianito Roque said in a statement.

The Community Learning Center has 26 computers manned by instructors trained by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

It is one of the projects under Microsoft Philippines' Unlimited Potential program, a global initiative which focuses on increasing worldwide computer literacy by providing technology skills to a chosen group. The program is called "Tulay" in the Philippines.

The two other OFW centers are in Malaysia and Singapore.

Summer means more work

By Tina G. Santos

MANILA Mayor Lito Atienza has urged city engineering officials to take advantage of the summer season to complete the construction of public school buildings and road improvement projects.

"The city government's efforts must be doubled to finish work on various public facilities," Atienza said.

The mayor issued the order during his recent meeting with department heads and chiefs of bureaus and offices.

He reminded city planner Jun Tablan and city engineer Armand Andres to coordinate with each other to ensure the completion of ongoing city projects as soon as possible.

The mayor cited in particular the Geronimo Santiago Elementary School in San Miguel, Manila, which burned down recently, displacing hundreds of students and teachers.

Earlier, Atienza also ordered the city engineering office to accelerate road repair work and drainage de-clogging projects in the city.

Funeral to be a protest march?

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.
and Philip C. Tubeza

STREAMERS expressing grief and anger will be carried by supporters during the funeral procession for former congressman Henry Lanot, who will be laid to rest this morning.

Lanot's younger brother, Grover, told the INQUIRER yesterday, "We are praying for the speedy resolution of the case."

The former congressman, who would have been 56 in July, was shot dead while eating inside a Pasig City restaurant last Wednesday.

His remains were brought to the House of Representatives yesterday morning.

Lanot was congressman of Pasig City for two consecutive terms. In 2004, he ran for mayor but lost to Vicente Eusebio.

But Lanot filed a protest to challenge Eusebio's victory. The case is awaiting resolution.

Supporters quickly claimed the killing was politically motivated. Eusebio's camp just as quickly denied any involvement in the murder.

Yesterday, Eusebio's son, Councilor and acting Mayor Bobby Eusebio, announced that the city council would give a P100,000 reward for any information that would lead to the arrest of Lanot's killer.

HENRY Lanot

The reward would come from the fund of the office of the city mayor, the younger Eusebio told the INQUIRER.

This was on top of the P100,000 reward the Philippine National Police promised earlier.

'Cowardly act'

"We also strongly condemn the cowardly act committed against Congressman Lanot. Such acts of violence have no place in a civilized and progressive community such as ours," Eusebio said in a statement.

After Lanot's death, his supporters who gathered at the hospital where he was rushed after the shooting, started talking about holding massive rallies.

Lanot's ally, Pasig City Rep. Robert "Dudot" Jaworski Jr. said he had not heard of any plan to turn the funeral march today into a protest rally.

"His wife (Zenaida) did not want to turn the funeral into something political," Jaworski added.

But like Lanot's brother, he said he would not be surprised if some of the slain politician's supporters would express their sentiments.

The funeral march from the Arlington Chapel to the Pasig City Public Cemetery will start at 9 a.m. today.

Meanwhile, Jaworski called yesterday for the relief of the entire Pasig police force, including its chief, P/Senior Supt. Raul Medina.

"Is there a total breakdown of peace and order in Pasig? Is there lawlessness and warlord to fret? I wonder who will be next to fall," Jaworski said in a statement, citing not just Lanot's murder but also unresolved robbery cases involving Pasig police officials.

He urged Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes and PNP chief Director General Arturo Lomibao to file administrative charges and initiate summary dismissal proceedings against Medina.

He said the Pasig police force should be replaced by "more efficient law enforcers with no strong political affiliations."

Jaworski said his constituents want Medina out because they felt that he was "sleeping on the job."

He said Pasig residents also complained about the alleged participation of Medina's men in the illegal demolition of shanties in Carlota Mendoza Compound in Barangay Palatiw, Pasig City, last year.

Overhaul

Jaworski wanted Reyes and Lomibao to effect an overhaul of the Pasig police force similar to that in Abra following allegations that the police were used as "private armies" by political warlords in the province.

Lanot's remains were brought to the House of Representatives for necrological services yesterday morning presided over by Speaker Jose de Venecia.

"The treacherous killing of my friend Henry is a direct attack on Congress as an institution," Jaworski said.

"I call on my fellow congressmen to join this battle against the killing of politicians and election protests," he added.

Why should churches not be taxed?

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

EVERY time there's a high-profile killing or assassination with the use of a gun, licensed gun holders suffer.

In the wake of the assassination of former Rep. Henry Lanot, the Philippine National Police (PNP) has become doubly strict in issuing permits to carry firearms to individuals applying for them.

Even gun stores have been forbidden to display high-powered firearms during gun shows and in their show windows.

The PNP is barking up the wrong tree.

Most crimes where guns were used were committed by persons whose firearms were unlicensed. In cases where the firearms used in a crime were licensed or documented, the gunwielders were persons in authority.

The broad-daylight holdup in Pasig City was pulled off by three members of the city police force.

The suspect in the killing of a Pagadian City journalist several years ago was a policeman.

In short, civilian holders of licensed guns seldom, if ever, use their firearms for criminal activities because they can easily be traced.

* * *

I doff my hat to Director General Arturo Lomibao, PNP chief, for dismissing outright the three Pasig policemen who held up a moneychanger shop employee of P10,000.

The three cops—PO1 Melvin Claveria, PO2 Rodolfo Molina and PO2 Lazaro Hiyao—don't have to go through the long, tedious process of an administrative hearing. They're already civilians and facing a criminal case of robbery.

That was a fast one Lomibao pulled on hoodlums in uniform. Most of his predecessors would have waited for a decision from a hearing officer before signing the walking papers.

But Lomibao is a different kind of chief. He's not one to dilly-dally in a complaint where the guilt of the accused policemen is plain to see.

With Lomibao at the helm of the PNP, criminal-minded and abusive cops will think twice, thrice before doing anything foolish.

* * *

Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno is under fire for saying that the commercial operations of the Catholic Church and other religious groups should be taxed.

Parayno's plan to tax the church may be controversial, but if we take a long, hard and unbiased look at it, he's right.

Why should the businesses of the church not be taxed? Are clergy people above the law?

Are prominent religious gurus Mike Velarde and Eddie Villanueva, who have big business empires, free from tax?

If they are, then it's no wonder many individuals want to establish their own religion so their earnings would be tax-free.

While we ordinary citizens pay our taxes, priests and ministers who earn oodles and oodles of money are not taxed because they use the name of God.

METRO BRIEFS

Preventing fire

SMOKE alarms may soon become regular fixtures in Metro Manila homes. The Bureau of Fire Protection-National Capital Region is urging local governments to enact an ordinance that requires smoke detectors in residential houses, said regional director Danilo Cabrera. Most fires occur during the night, when sleeping residents cannot see or smell the smoke from a burning house or building, said Cabrera. While business establishments are obliged by law to install smoke detectors, no such law in the country requires smoke or fire alarms in single- or double-family houses, he said. A smoke alarm can go a long way in preventing fire incidents in the metropolis, since the device senses smoke even in the dead of night, he added. *DJ Yap*

Earth Day in Manila

A SPIRITUAL, as well as aesthetic experience awaits friends and visitors of the Arroceros Forest Park on Earth Day, April 24. The Winner Foundation Inc., together with Earth Day Network International and Earth Day Network Philippines, will continue to pay their respects to Mother Earth when they celebrate Earth Day 2005 in the park. The program will start at 9 a.m. with an ecumenical prayer of thanksgiving to be led by Fr. John Leydon, SSC, of the Malate Parish and co-founder of the Center for Ecozoic Living and Learning. Representatives from the Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and Protestant communities and artists will also be present during the affair.

Librarians' seminar

THE PHILIPPINE Society of Librarians and Information Specialists (PSLIS) will hold a seminar-workshop entitled "DIGITIZATION: A preservation tool?" on April 21-22 at Don Bosco Technical College, Gen. Kalentong Street, Mandaluyong City. For reservations, registration and other inquiries, please contact telephone numbers 724-1994, 726-0931 loc. 253, 527-9672, and 0916-7120341.

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Text us your feedback: inquirer met name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart) *Editor* **Ester G. Dipasupil** ■ *Assistant Editor* **Cenon B. Bibe Jr.**

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No ECC request for Manila park–LLDA

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE MANILA city government has no pending application for an Environmental Clearance Certificate (ECC) to construct a teachers' building inside the city's disputed Arroceros Forest Park.

This was revealed by the Laguna Lake Development Authority which is authorized to decide whether or not the city government could proceed with its project, expected to be built on a portion of the 12-hectare forest park.

LLDA General Manager Edgardo Manda said the agency had received an inquiry from a teachers' association, presumably the Division of City Schools in Manila, concerning the Arroceros Forest Park, but not a formal application for an ECC.

The city government had already brought construction equipment into the park, which it had also padlocked. Winner Foundation Inc., caretakers of the park, are opposing the construction of any edifice in the park, citing environmental concerns.

"We have to know if the construction equipment was meant for the building. We're going to send a team this week to investigate," Manda said.

Manda said the team would also meet with Manila Mayor Lito Atienza to see if the city government had violated any environmental regulations by delivering construction materials to the site without an ECC.

"Definitely, we'll have an environmental impact assessment report. If the project does not pass the assessment, we cannot issue an ECC," he said.

Winner Foundation irisists that the Arroceros Forest Park was intended as an "open school" and a camp site for public schoolchildren who could not afford to pay camp fees.

The teachers, who own the property, but have allowed the foundation to manage it for more than a decade, agreed that the park was for educational purposes, but said there was no prohibition on the building of a concrete structure in the area.

Anti-drug trafficking alliance forged

By Leila B. Salaverria

WITH the Asia-Pacific region accounting for 98 percent of the metamphetamine (shabu) seizures in the world, 25 countries from the area yesterday forged an alliance to stop mounting drug trafficking activities.

Customs officials of the 25 countries are in Manila for the week-long Asia Pacific Regional Seminar on Synthetic Drugs and Chemical Precursors of the World Customs Organization (WCO), now ongoing at the Bayview Hotel.

Bureau of Customs (BOC) Commissioner Alberto Lina said the joint effort of the participating countries is important in thwarting the growing menace of drug trafficking.

"The Philippines is beset with illegal drugs that gradually destroy our future. The only way to stop this is cooperation between law enforcers and the community.

"This would also be realized with the participation of leaders from other countries," he said in a statement.

Lina said the WCO seminar would facilitate the exchange of information and technology regarding the drug trafficking trade between countries.

Participants are also expected to learn new information about the manufacture of synthetic drugs, the various devices used, and the drugs' effects on users.

Lina also said the discussions would help the countries to identify weaknesses in border control and other related problems.

A BOC statement quoted WCO Deputy Director General Kunio Mikuriya as saying that 98 percent of the world's metamphetamine confiscations occur in the Asia-Pacific region.

He added that in the same area, the volume of the so-called "Ecstasy" drugs seized had reached 4,800 kilograms.

Meanwhile, BOC Deputy Commissioner Celso Templo said the bureau accounts for one-eighth of the illegal drugs seized in the past five years at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, the Port of Manila, and the Manila International Container Port.

Apart from collecting taxes and duties, the BOC is also tasked to stop smuggling activities.

Bomb scare halts traffic on Bicutan Exchange

By Fran Katigbak

ARE METRO commuters getting paranoid?

Passengers of a southbound bus panicked Sunday evening when they noticed an unattended white plastic bag under one of the seats for a greater part of the trip.

Commuters of Pascual Liner Bus 039 suspected the bag contained a bomb, said PO2 Israel Perez of the Parañaque City police Precinct 3.

Investigators discovered the bag contained rice cakes, fried chicken and a bunch of bananas packed in a brown paper bag.

The bomb scare caused heavy traffic at the Bicutan Exchange at around 7 p.m. on Sunday as officials of the Philippine National Construction Corp. stopped the bus and diverted other vehicles to the west service road.

Perez told the INQUIRER one of the passengers claimed the plastic bag had been under the seat all the way from Edsa to the South Luzon Expressway.

"When investigators felt the package," he said, "they were surprised that the contents were soft, hardly what they expected of a bomb or explosive device."

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PBA stars may beef up SEAG five

Go quits BAP over Lim's 'intransigence'

By Marc Anthony Reyes

IF PUSH comes to shove, the Philippine Basketball Association, home of the finest players in the land, will not hesitate to lend its millionaire mainstays to the SEA Games-bound national team.

PBA commissioner Noli Eala made this assurance yesterday on the eve of a crucial meeting among officials of the pro league, the Philippine Olympic Committee, Philippine Basketball League, Basketball Association of the Philippines, and major collegiate leagues.

Also yesterday, Go Teng Kok resigned his appointment as BAP project director over what he described as the "intransigence" of secretary general Graham Lim, who is battling the deportation order issued against him by the Bureau of Immigration.

Go had earlier advised his close friend Lim to step aside and let other BAP officials handle the affairs of the association. Lim is said to have turned down Go's request.

Eala, PBL commissioner Chino Trinidad and the other officials will meet with POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco in Makati today to forge an alliance and to "reintegrate RP basketball."

EALA: Aid coming

GO: Lim's move

The meeting follows the recent debacle suffered by the Cebuana Lhuillier-sponsored national team against a team made up of movie stars and comedians, among others.

That squad is supposed to represent the country in the Southeast Asian Games here in November and in the Southeast Asian Basketball Association tournament in Singapore in June.

Eala said there is an urgent need to discuss how local basketball's major stakeholders can form strong teams for future international competitions.

He said everyone wants to avoid the embarrassment suffered by the RP five in the championship game against the Parañaque Jets in a recent tournament of the National Basketball Conference (NBC).

"We should address the matter in an organized way," said Eala. "Let's put up a team that is not personality-based or league-based, but system-based and organized."

He said the PBA is willing to help in that effort but stressed that other stakeholders must also be given a chance to participate in building the RP team.

The PBL, through Trinidad, earlier offered to represent the country in SEABA and SEA Games.

The PBA commissioner cited the pro league's system which was developed by Chot Reyes, coach of the RP team to the Asian basketball Confederation (ABC) tournament next year.

In the Reyes system, Eala noted, there is a Team A which is composed of all-pros and a Team B which is made up of a mixture of PBA and collegiate players. Both teams "work under the same system."

"If scouting reports indicate that Team B would be enough, then there's no need to field Team A," said Eala. "But if it requires the participation of Team A, then that's what we will do."

Referring to reports emanating from the POC that Singapore will field Chinese imports, he said the RP team will have to strategize and deal with it.

Eala said there is still a lot of time for the SEABA squad to "reintegrate" and be as strong as it could get.

Go, who also quit as BAP executive board adviser, urged the officials in today's meeting to "sit down as true sports leaders, without specific titles, affiliations and personal interests."

Bapi presses for POC recognition

THE GROUP that insists it is the "legal" national governing body for amateur basketball is pressing its bid for recognition by the Philippine Olympic Committee and offering its support in the formation of a stronger RP quintet.

Nic Jorge, secretary general of the Basketball Association of the Philippines Inc. (Bapi) yesterday urged the POC to consider the 2003 Court of Appeals order recognizing the Bapi as the sole and legitimate group for basketball.

Jorge also asked POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco to review the documents presented by Bapi before the Olympic body.

"We were not given a chance before, but with Mr. Cojuangco—I think the POC leadership will have an open mind in reviewing our petition."

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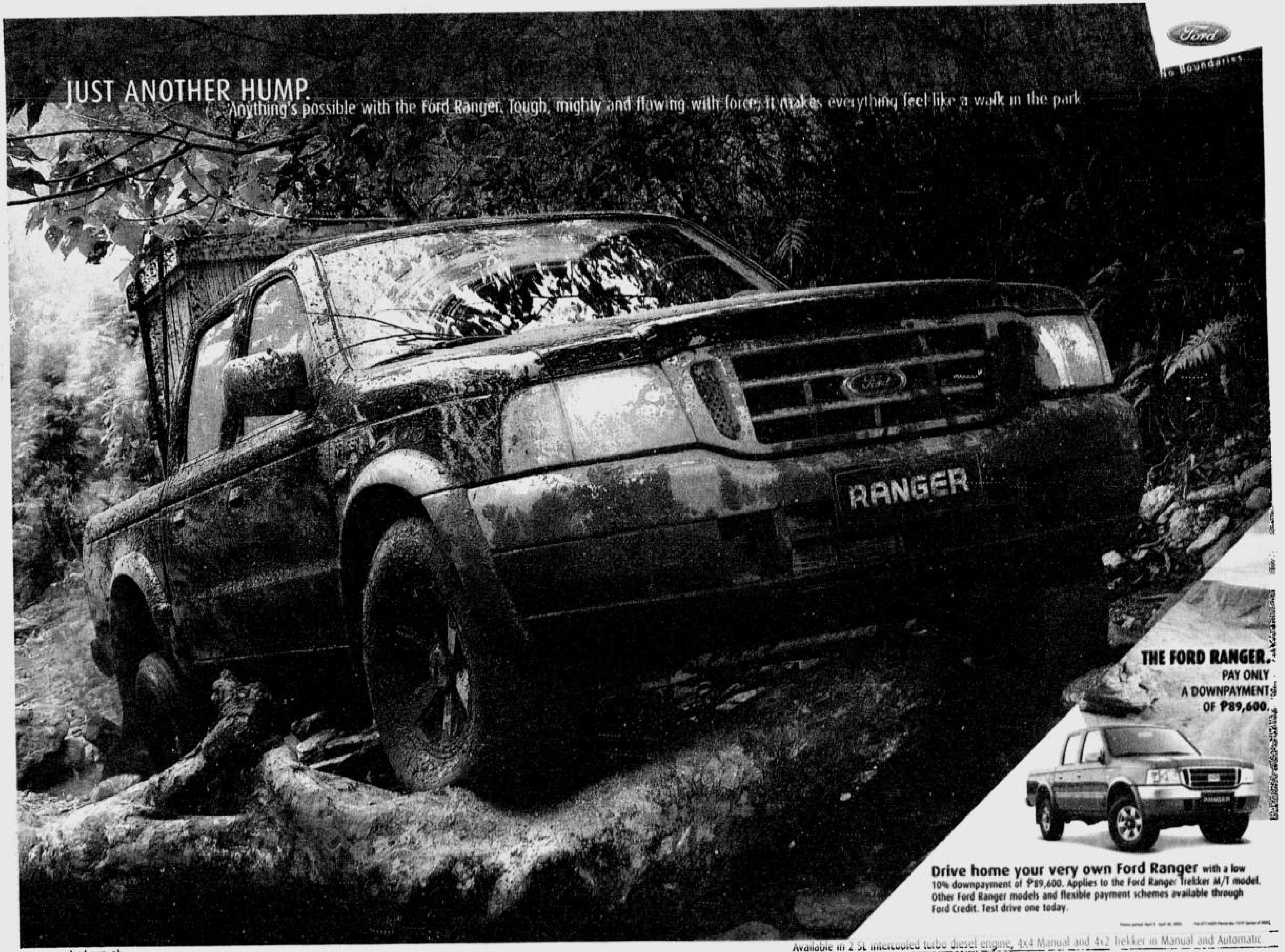
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STANDINGS	W	L
Montaña	3	0
Welcoat	3	0
Harbour	3	1
Magnolia	2	2
Toyota Otis	1	2
Bacchus	1	2
Granny Goose	1	3
Nenaco	0	4

GAMES TODAY
(*Makati Coliseum*)
2 p.m.—Bacchus vs Toyota Otis
4 p.m.—Montaña vs Welcoat

Welcoat eyes revenge vs Montaña today

AFTER the Montaña Jewels triumphed over the Welcoat Paintmasters in the last PBL championship series, the losing finalists can't wait to redeem themselves.

"*Gusto namin makabawi sa kanila* (we want to get back at them), so I'm sure it's going to be a tough and interesting game," said Welcoat coach Caloy Garcia, as the two league heavyweights battle for solo leadership in the PBL Unity Cup today at the Makati Coliseum.

The Jewels and Paintmasters will try to keep their pristine records at 4 p.m., after Bacchus Energy Drinks vies for its second straight victory against Toyota Otis-Letran at 2 p.m.

The Jewels, who recently bagged their first championship since joining the league in 1998, have been leaning on top gunner Alex Compton's uncanny ability to shoot beyond the arc.

The seasoned 30-year-old guard, however, has also been getting ample support from shooters Al Vergara, Reed Juntilla and Ariel Capus.

The Jewels may have the backcourt advantage, but the Paintmasters banner some of the league's best big men, including Anthony Washington, Marvin Ortiguerra and Jay-R Reyes.

Toyota Otis-Letran, too, has been leaning on shooters Emerson Oreta, Mark Macapagal and Ardy Larong, but it was 6-foot-5 forward Dennis Daa who exploded with 27 points against Harbour Centre last Tuesday.

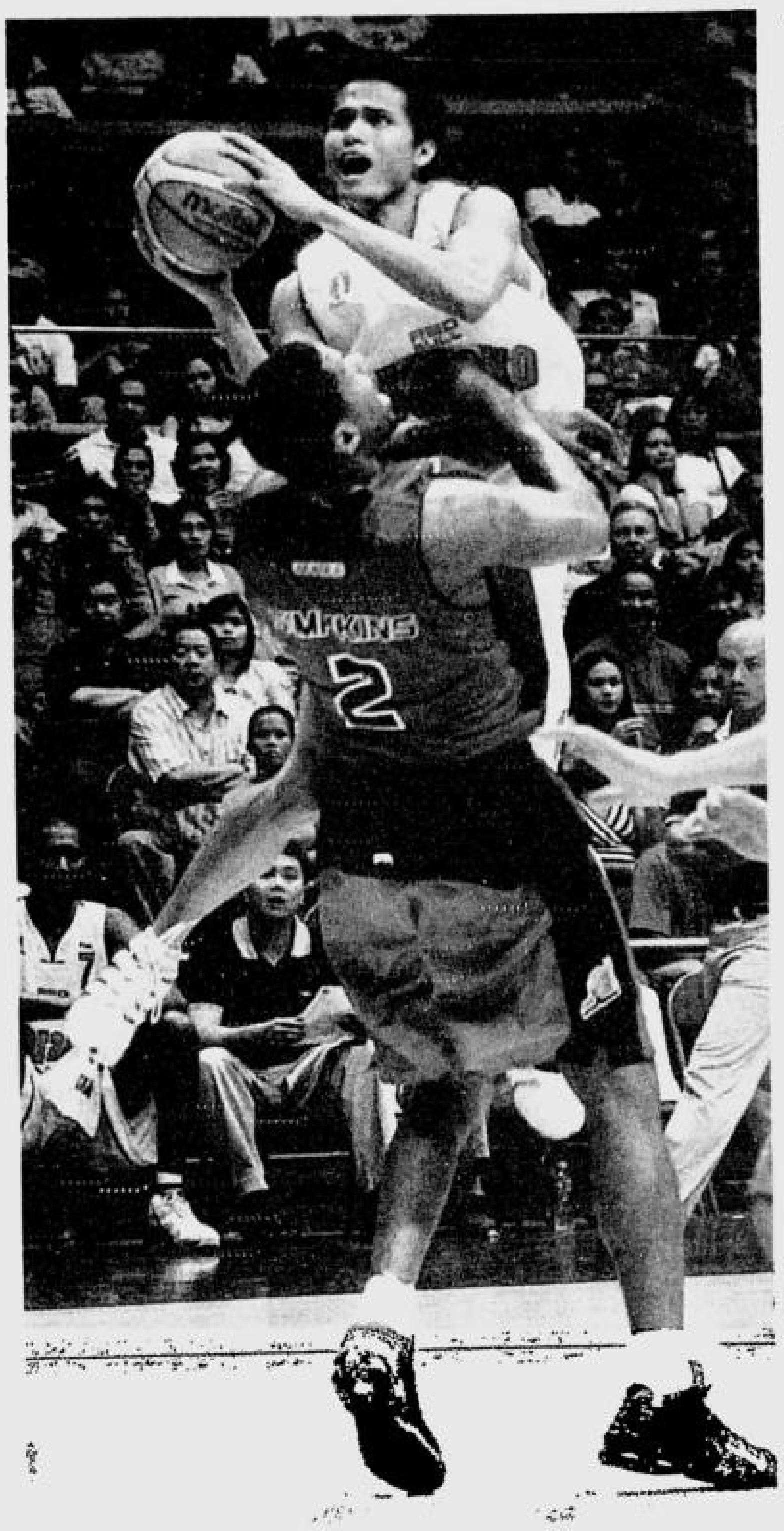
Daa's heroics, however, were overshadowed after Mac Cardona fired the game-winning shot with one-tenth of a second remaining to lift the Portmasters past the Knights, 75-73.

Thus, coach Louie Alas stressed that the Knights should not let their guard down until the final buzzer.

"If we can't play a smart game for 40 minutes, then we have slim chances of winning," said Alas. "We have to be aggressive and tough at both ends of the court to win."

Bacchus finally snapped its 14-game losing streak after winning over Nenaco-San Beda, 67-59, behind Fil-Am forward Mike Holper's double-double performance of 13 points and 11 rebounds.

The Jewels posted their third straight win against Magnolia Ice Cream, 64-55, while the Paintmasters are coming off a 72-69 victory against Granny Goose. *Jasmine W. Payo*



RED Bull's Lordy Tugade charges into Alaska import Dickey Simpkins during their game at the Araneta Coliseum Sunday. The inspired Aces overpowered the Barako, 106-85. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Italy, Iran quints join pocket tilt for RP five

By June Navarro

WAITING for a worthy opponent to take the bait, the men's national basketball team made up of PBA stars has finally lured two international ballclubs for a pocket tournament next week.

Italian ballclub Pirelli and Iran's national squad agreed to participate in the three-day meet set April 24-26, which will serve as the first tuneup game of the PBA-backed Nationals.

PBA commissioner Noli Eala said the Italians, who have an average height of 6-foot-5, would plane in on April 21, two days before the arrival of the Iranians.

RP coach Chot Reyes will split the national training pool into RP Team A and Team B to complete a four-team cast in the tournament.

The event was originally slated March 27-29 but the dearth of strong opponents forced the PBA and the Basketball Association of the Philippines to reschedule it.

Foreign teams from China, South Korea, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, Australia and Russia backed out at the last minute due to time constraints.

"Basketball fanatics will love to watch this mini-tournament," said Eala, who drew up a battle plan last year with BAP officials to rescue the country from humiliating stints on the Asian cage scene.

"This is the PBA's own little way of preparing and training the national squad for the bigger battles ahead," added Eala.

Coach Reyes and the national team will see action in the ABC Champions Cup here next month and the Taipei-Jones Cup in July before testing its mettle in the Fiba-Asian Basketball Championship at the end of the year.

The Asian meet serves as qualifying to the World Basketball Championships next year in Saitama, Japan.

ROUND THE BEND, PERFECTLY: Defending champion Jolet Jao tackles a curve brilliantly as he tries to preserve his lead over Benjo Mendoza (100) in the kickoff leg of the 2005 Shell Advance Superbikes Series at the Batangas Racing Circuit recently. Jao topped the race sanctioned by NAMSSA, sponsored by Pilipinas Shell, Toyota Motors Phils., Norkis Yamaha, Kilton Motors, Denso, MOF Company and Petron, and backed by Yokohama and Celltron Marketing.

NCR ELIMS

Beta leads winners in adidas Streetball

TEAM Beta fashioned out a thrilling 22-21 victory over Team Backlash in a duel of San Beda squads to lead the winners in the National Capital Region eliminations of the 10th adidas Streetball Challenge at SM Megamall over the weekend.

Rogemar Menor scored eight points, including two in the shootout, to power Team Beta-San Beda A to victory in the seniors division of the Big Leg, one of the two featured events in the four-month long, nationwide half-court street basketball. The other category is the pocket tournament.

Other scorers for Team Beta were JC Hermida, Jr., Jay-R Taganas and Eduardo Tecson, who had seven, five and two points, respectively.

In girls' play, Team Galaxy of UP Diliman edged Team Gallor of UST, 11-9 to advance to the national finals of this annual event co-presented by Globe Gentxt and backed by McDonald's, Cherifer Multivitamins, Snickers chocolate bar, Coppertone, adidas fragrance and body care, Blue Angel alcohol, Milo, Powerade, Viva Mineral Water, adidas eyewear and Yehey.com.

Danielle Bautista paced Team Galaxy with six points while Ana Tolentino and Diwa Paz scored three and two points, respectively. Sharon Briones topscored for Team Gallor with five points.

In a battle of La Salle Greenhills squads, Team Hardcore (LSGH-A) beat Team Incentive (LSGH-B), 22-17, to cop the juniors crown while Team Quarter Pounder, also of LSGH-A, took the midgets diadem with a 19-17 victory over Team Chicken McDo of Barangay Caniogan.

Duremdes, Aquino lift SLR stock

HAVING latched on to a good import, Sta. Lucia Realty has finally gotten its act together and is beginning to wiggle out of the cellar by posting two consecutive victories at the end of the first round of the Gran Matador-PBA Fiesta Conference.

But the arrival of Ryan Fletcher alone wasn't what really caused the Realtors' resurgence. The simultaneous coming to form by the locals, particularly stars Kenneth Duremdes and Marlou Aquino, has spelled the difference as well.

Fact is, coach Alfrancis Chua has long waited for this moment, when the Realtors will have all cylinders running.

With Duremdes and Aquino carding superb numbers, the Realtors snapped a five-game losing skid by nipping Purefoods Tender Juicy Hotdogs in overtime, 93-92, last Wednesday. Four days later, in the first-ever road game of the PBA in Roxas City, Capiz, Sta. Lucia routed Shell, 90-65.

Against the Hotdogs, Duremdes had 22 points, four rebounds, six assists, a steal and a blocked shot, while Aquino added 19 points, six rebounds, an assist and three steals.

Versus the Turbo Chargers, Duremdes had 24 points, seven rebounds, five assists and a steal in 40 minutes, while Aquino had 17 points, six rebounds and an assist in 17 minutes.

For their efforts, Duremdes and Aquino were named co-Players of the Week by the PBA Press Corps.

DUREMDES

JVC regional badminton tournament under way

OVER 300 players from Metro Manila and eight provinces will see action in the inaugural staging of the JVC Regional Badminton Championships today at the Excel Badminton Center in City of San Fernando, Pampanga.

Former national team mainstay Fred Pormales and Far Eastern University's Stanley Macaspac and Marc Yuzon head the cast in the elite men's division.

FEU's Ma. Theresa Sebastian and Cabanatuan City's Annalyn Uy lead the field in the distaff side.

San Fernando Mayor Oscar Rodriguez, provincial board member Ceferino Laus and JVC Phils. Inc. general manager Kazue Salud will grace the opening rites at 10 am.

The event lured participants from Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, Antipolo, Bulacan, Baguio, Tarlac and Pampanga.

Also on tap in the four-day event are the 16-under championship and the men's collegiate tournament, featuring Holy Angel University, Nueva Ecija-UST, Lyceum Northeastern U and YMCA-Pampanga.

Winners will receive cash prizes and trophies and earn slots in the 5th JVC Open Championships in June.

Cebu will host the second leg on April 25-29 at the Metro Sports Badminton Club in Salinas Drive, Lahug, Cebu City.

Classic kegfest rolls off Friday

BOYSEN Philippines, in cooperation with the Tenpin Bowlers Association of Makati (TBAM), will be holding the Boysen-TBAM Classic Bowling Tournament at the Powerbowl Bowling Center at Powerplant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati City on April 22 to 26.

Kicking off the tournament calendar of the various bowling associations under the Philippine Bowling Congress (PBC), this annual event is expected to draw the participation of the national bowling team members, national youth bowlers, veteran and senior bowlers, aspiring keglers as well as the members of the country's bowling associations.

TBAM will be holding the 2nd Silver Wings Seniors Tournament simultaneously.

The TBAM board composed of lawyer Ted Baroque (president), Chucky Marcelo (tournament director), Edna Beltran (VP for seniors), Abbie Gan (secretary), Girlie Solis (treasurer), Mario Enriquez (VP for youth) and Bert Lim (Pro) is staking over P500,000 in cash prizes, including a P100,000 cash prize for the first bowler to score a perfect "300," courtesy of Pioneer Insurance.

Old kid in town

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

IT'S now showing. The movie in my mind tells me the old kid in town is celebrating.

This time, he'll do it differently.

He will water the plants.

He will bathe his African crawlers, a.k.a. worms.

Walk.

He does all that after hearing Mass at the village chapel.

Some athletes beg off from practice.

Employees go on a birthday leave.

The wealthy, usually, go to Hong Kong, if not Singapore.

This old kid in town, after the watering, bathing and walking, will next elect to go to his hill. And while there, he will attempt to write a poem.

Ah, it had been his dream to reinvent "Vox Populi," a poem that won a prize in college-wide literary contest. It had gone up in flames to save a comrade's life in a 1081 safe house.

A painter can repaint a topic with nary a hassle.

A poet toils in recreating an inspiration, especially if that piece was a free verse.

Why this old kid in town can't dump the midnight muse is a puzzle as complex as a golf swing. It clings like a barnacle, it arrives unstoppably like the dawn, is deathless as grass.

When he was younger, he'd set early, rise early. When years added to his life, the habit changed. He'd set late, rise late.

Then back to the good, nay, old days. Deciding to add life to his years, he started to set early again, rise early again.

The early setting made him stronger in the rising. Suddenly, basketball had become peanuts again. In his hill, it was business as usual anew. Almost always, his day was done in a breeze.

When the celebrating came, the old kid in town would see every soul invited to the occasion departing in high spirit.

In America, some go fishing by way of celebrating. Over there, fishing is as natural as drinking bottled water.

They catch salmon or not, fine.

They catch trout or not, fine.

The fishing is the thing. Not the fish.

This old kid in town is writing by way of celebrating. He wants to be on his hill and, like Sir Paul, become the fool from there.

He weaves rhyme or not, fine.

He makes free verse or not, fine.

The writing is the thing. Not the poem.

He says, he'll be the man with the foolish grin as he sits perfectly still, not day after day, but only for today.

When I was covering the Tour of Luzon not too long ago, many cyclists did their celebrating on the road. On some occasions, I did mine myself. It was only at the end of the day's race that we shared God's grace with everybody. To each cyclist, a bottle of beer was more than enough to pay homage to the occasion. A bottle of beer was their kind of drinking in moderation.

Over the years, some have stopped celebrating and done only commemorating.

The old kid in town respects that. Says he may one day end up like that.

But what is celebrating, commemorating?

Is lighting a candle in a prayer to add life to one's years an act of celebration?

The old kid in town has another view: He commemorates every celebration with a drink or two.

To him, that is poetry beyond compare.

Crafted in the hill of his mind.

* * *

FASTBREAK. Joemar A. Florido is celebrating endlessly these days because he just passed the bar exams. His feat gave him the rare distinction of being a CPA-Lawyer-and maybe made him the one and only from Calauag, Quezon, to have achieved that? Joemar being an only child, his parents, Joven and Elvie, must still be in Cloud 9 up to now. Cheers!

RMHS dancers rule roost; Obrero gymnasts sparkle

RAMON Magsaysay High nearly swept the opposition off their feet in dancesports while Barrio Obrero Elementary School and Tondo High School sparkled with golden performances in gymnastics as the 4th Manila Youth Games burst into action yesterday at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

RMHS claimed four of the six gold medals disputed in dancesports held at the San Andres Gym, lining up its students to scholarship grants offered by the Dancesports Association of the Philippines, according to MYG chief organizer Ali Atienza.

The tandem of William Dave Bernardino and Cynthia Tajon came out with two golds after dominating the couples junior standard and couples junior Latin categories.

They beat the pairs of Kenneth Madrigal and Edgarine de Guzman of Marcos High and Maverick Mamargun and Ma. Rizza Lopez of Manila High in the junior standard, while also besting schoolmates Neil Ross Barrientos and Donna Ardan and Mark Anthony Bello and Winkel Bernardino in the junior Latin.

Rodolfo Ignacio III and Samantha Pineda ruled the couples youth standard, defeating Freddie Bailon and Rochelyn Estiller of Manila High and Anthony Masaplod and Rodessa de los Reyes of Marcos High, who finished second and third, respectively.

Also dishing out winning moves were Gerard Paul Jecino and Deianira Tibus in the youth Latin, besting schoolmates Kenneth Dungca and Erika Ann Domingo and Marcos High's Anthony Masaplod and Jobelle Landero.

The gold medals that escaped RMHS' clutches went to Beata's Romar Escudero and Erlyn Regaspi in the juvenile standard and Margarita's Danilo Yadao Jr. and Ronalyn Bajadores in the juvenile Latin.

Over at the RMSC gymnastics center, Tondo High School reigned supreme with nine gold medals courtesy of John Vincent Aproda, Emil Limpio and Erica Jean Pana, who posted three victories each.

Aproda triumphed in the floor, balance beam and all-around in the level II 13-15, while Limpio and Pana topped level I 12-under and level II 13-15 classes, respectively.

Barrio Obrero Elementary School turned the girls gymnastics division into its own turf as Desiree Saldana and Jeanne Rigayen bagged three gold medals each.

Sharing the spotlight was Estrada, a high school senior, who flashed brilliance in the floor exercise, horse vault and all-around events to duplicate the performance he dished out in the Palarong Pambansa qualifying meet last week. *Marc Anthony Reyes*

ERIK Morales wants to take on biggest names in lightweight category. REUTERS

Morales-Pacquiao return bout dims

Mexican insists on moving up in weight

ERIK Morales yesterday reiterated his intention to move up to the heavier lightweight division, dealing a telling blow to hopes of a rematch between the proud Mexican gladiator and Manny Pacquiao.

Morales, who beat the Filipino ring idol by unanimous decision in Las Vegas last month, said he wants to take on the biggest names in the 135-lb weight class.

In an interview carried by the Mexican website Box-Latino, the former three-division world champion told reporter Salvador Martinez that he is meeting with his promoter Bob Arum in the next few days to formally discuss his plan to vie for the WBC lightweight title, possibly against Diego Corrales first.

Arum is said to be open to a Morales-Pacquiao rematch this year but has not made any definitive statement about his ward's plan to skip the planned Pacquiao fight date and contend for a new world title as a lightweight.

Pacquiao is set to climb the ring again against a still undetermined foe in July, possibly in the United States, as a tune-up for a rematch with Morales.

Corrales, the reigning WBO lightweight champ, is set to collide with WBC lightweight king Jose Luis Castillo on May 7 at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas.

Morales said should Corrales win, he hopes to fight the tall and lanky American. If Castillo prevails, he will instead wait for the former to move up to the junior welterweight class and fight super-champion Kostya Tszyu in September. Morales could then vie for the vacated lightweight title.

Pacquiao is now in the US to thresh out problems concerning the alleged non-payment of his IRS tax obligations. *Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor*

Filipino jins go home empty-handed

MADRID—The RP-Petron taekwondo team ended its campaign in the World Championships on a sad note as it failed to bring home a medal for the first time in the last staging of the meet that came to a close here Sunday.

"Overall, it's a good performance. Considering the level of competition here, our athletes played well," said PTA vice president Sung Chun Hong. "We lost the matches, but all were very close."

PTA president Robert Aventajado also congratulated the team via long distance call right after Ernesto Mendoza dropped a close match against American sensation Mark Anthony Lopez.

While team manager Noli Gabriel said the Filipinos proved they can hold their own against some of the world's top jins, he also acknowledged that the Nationals must improve in time for the biennial meet set Nov. 27 to Dec. 5.

Gabriel sees Thailand as the team to beat in taekwondo in the SEA Games after it won two bronze medal here.

The country also won a bronze—courtesy of Roberto Cruz—in the 2003 edition of the meet held in Germany.

LEAD TO GOLD: The Lead Institute of Sports unveils its national sports program for taekwondo, football and badminton during the launch of its "Lead to Gold" campaign at the NBC Tent at The Fort, Taguig City, last Friday. Present during the opening ceremonies were INQUIRER president and Lead vice chair Sandy Prieto-Romualdez, Lead trustee and acting executive director Carmelo Caluag SJ, Philippine Badminton Association vice president Edgardo Aglipay, Bobong Velez, Allan Caidic, Turing Lozada and bowler CJ Suarez.

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Cuevas-Bernaldo barges into Epson Cup 'A' finals

CUEVAS (left) and Bernaldo get set for a service reception in the men's Class A semifinals.

ALEX Cuevas and Renel Bernaldo smashed their way into the championship round while Melody Villaceran and Jojo Hipolito won by default Sunday in the semifinals of the Epson Cup 2 tournament at the Greenhills Badminton Center.

Cuevas, the reigning non-ranking national champion, and Bernaldo booted out Jere Fregil and Anthony Samonte, 15-3, 15-13, to arrange a title clash in the men's Class A doubles with Gabby Nepomuceno and Jeff Tablante.

Nepomuceno, a former National University standout, conspired with Tablante to outclass Gener Godoy and Alex Bartolay, 15-11, 15-6, in the event sponsored by Shell, PBNet, Yehey.com, BHM, Apple Center, Konica and Mizuno.

In ladies' Class A, Villaceran and Hipolito advanced outright into the finals after Boots Quilala and Eleanor Tesorero failed to show up in their semifinal match. Villaceran and Hipolito bundled out Quilala and Tesorero in the elims, 15-0, 15-0.

Villaceran and Hipolito will face Kathy Kuan and Cathy Escasinas, who prevailed over Wowie Agustin and Susan Luminarias, 15-0, 15-0.

Joy Balcita and Debbie Madrid also had an easy time disposing off Elise Alarilla and Carina Dizon, 15-6, 15-9, to figure in the Class B ladies' doubles championship match.

Balcita, a television commercial model, and Madrid will meet Mafi Basit and Bing Mejia, who upset Glenda Laserna and Russel Tatel, 7-15, 15-8, 15-7, in the tournament supported by Wilson, Citibank, Apple Center, Fitness First and Chowking Madison Square.

In men's Class B, Jake Saberon and Riki Francisco scored a hard-earned 9-15, 15-8, 15-8 win over Carlo Bagalso and Herbie Cano to set up a championship tussle with Jhun Adarna and Orly Amil, who won 15-12, 15-6, over Bryan Bermudez and Jordan Farinas.

Sanctioned by the Philippine Badminton Association, the event is also backed by UNO Magazine, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Badminton Philippines, Ridgewood Hotel-Baguio and radio stations Magic 89.9 and 99.5 RT.

The other championship protagonists: Erwin Valencia-Raoul Gonzales vs. Lance Hizon-Chito Basit (men's Class C); Helen Tam-Jean Kho vs. Betsy Ormido-Princess Cadauan (ladies' Class C); Malou Santos-Jennifer Soriano vs. Dea Alonzo-Guia Reyes (ladies' Class D). **Mixed doubles:** Ul Mendoza-JV Madrid vs. Beth Pulido-Paul Macatangay (Class B); Malen Enriquez-Marlon Enriquez vs. Cielo Regino-Wally Yonson (Class C); Katherine Perez-Asher Sajid vs. Ynez Veneracion-Mark Delgado (Class D).

Techwerk, Boysen fives in semis

RBT Techwerk and Boysen Paints both hurdled their respective assignments yesterday to earn the right to face Monolith Construction and Ironcon Builders, respectively, in the semifinals of the Boysen Paints Cup of the PCFBL-Aces Basketball Tournament at the Tanduay Gym in Quiapo.

Techwerk defeated tournament favorite PCFBL Selection, 98-89, while Boysen downed archrival Welcoat in a hotly contested game, 102-98.

Crisanto Bosing of Techwerk fired 43 points and Archie Olmeda added 20 to overshadow the 41-point output of PCFBI's former PBA player Aries Franco and the 22 of Joseph Yu.

Boysen Paints leaned on the sterling performances of Ross Reyes, Lester Ong, Natt Francisco and Boy Nabiula who combined for 74 points.

With the victory, Boysen dueled with first seed Monolith Construction last night.

Boysen and Techwerk must beat their opponents twice to enter the championships.

Monolith topped the eliminations with a 7-1 record followed by Ironcon (6-2).

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SPORTSWATCH

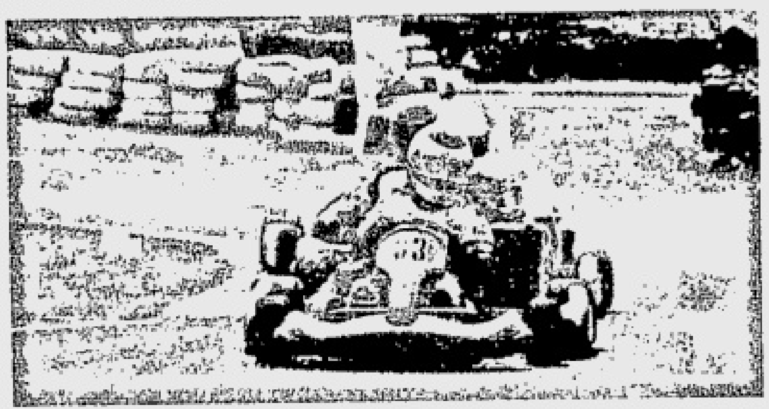
THE LOLA T-70 Mark 3 splendid in its British racing green livery.

Classic Cam-Am car at Trans Sport show

TRANS Sport Show, the country's largest publicly attended motoring event will put on display a replica of the classic 1965 Lola T-70 Mark 3 Cam-Am race car. The mid-engine car is powered by a 350 cubic inch Chevrolet HO V-8 engine mated to a Renault T30 5-speed transmission. The Lola T-70 had raced successfully in the Canadian-American Challenge Cup against such formidable opponents like the McLaren M8s, Ferrari P330, Chaparral 2-E and Porsche 908s. Organized by TradeShow International (TSI), Trans Sport Show has been an active and keen supporter of motor sport racing in the country. The event displays racecars and also host seminars on car racing, racecar preparations and driving, conducted by leading experts/drivers. A Porsche and Audi will also be featured during the 5-day event. A special display of Porsche cars will be set-up by the Manila Sports Car Club namely: a 1998 Porsche GT-2, 1979 Porsche Carrera SC and 1965 Porsche 911S. The Audi Owners Club will display an Audi TT coupe and an Audi A4. The show will be held April 20-24 at the Megatrade Hall of SM Megamall B, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City.

NBC backs Air 21 caging

THE NATIONAL Basketball Conference (NBC) has thrown its support to the Air 21 6-foot-and-above national championship slated May 26 to June 4. The Basketball Association of the Philippines-sanctioned tournament will have two teams each from Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao and National Capital Region. Games will be played in Metro Manila schools. NBC will form the southern Luzon team. The league is open only to players born not later than 1988. The best performers in the Air 21 event will carry the Philippine colors in the Southeast Asian Basketball Association (SEABA) junior championship this year. "This is our small contribution to basketball's grassroots development program," said NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla.



DOUBLE WINNER: Marlon Stockringer of SFIC (Kart 33) keeps his defensive line against Matteo Guidicelli of the Cebu Racing and Asian karting queen Michelle Bumargner of Intrepid-MM Racing to post a double win in the 2nd leg of the Shell Helix Superkarting Series held recently at the Boom na Boom Kart Track.

Pasay Blue cagers stay unbeaten

PASAY Blue subdued Pasay Violet, 75-63, last weekend to remain unbeaten in the Global Destiny Basketball League eliminations at the Pasay Sports Complex. The Pasay Blue cagers streaked to their seventh victory while dealing the Violet cagers their first defeat in seven outings in the grassroots basketball tourney supported by Solid Video Corp., Sony Philippines and MyDestiny Cable Internet. Valenzuela Light Blue (8-0) also went through the wringer against Valenzuela Blue (5-3) before prevailing 69-67 in the event also backed by Avid Sales Corp., Regent Foods and Molten balls. Muntinlupa Violet (5-0) rolled back winless Muntinlupa Orange (0-4), 75-65, at the Greenheights court in Muntinlupa City. Marikina Black (6-0) won by forfeiture over Marikina Light Blue (1-5).

Cebuano upsets former Thai champ

RODEL Quilaton of Cebu upset former World Boxing Council and International Boxing Federation junior flyweight king Saman Sorjaturong via unanimous decision on Sunday in Thailand. The youthful Quilaton, fighting for the second time since coming out of a self-imposed retirement, knocked down the Thai twice to earn the judges' nod in their six-round bout. Saman (46-8-1, 35 KOs) had ruled as the WBC-IBF 108-lb king after beating Mexican icon Humbert "Chiquita" Gonzalez on July 15, 1995 on a seventh-round technical knockout in Inglewood, California, in a contest dubbed 1995 Fight of the Year by Ring Magazine. He gave up the IBF crown soon after, then went on to defend the WBC title 10 times before losing it to Korean Choi Yosam in 1999 in Seoul, South Korea. Quilaton turned pro on May 30, 1999 against Ricardo Albia, who beat him by decision. Last March 5, the ALA Gym-trained Quilaton picked up his gloves again to decision veteran Allan Dugang in Tagbilaran City.

Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor

Bautista invited to fight in Hawaii

REIGNING World Boxing Organization Asia-Pacific bantamweight champion Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista has been invited once again to see action in Hawaii possibly against a Korean foe on July 7. Promoter Richard and Robert Villaver of Hawaii arrived in Cebu recently to negotiate with Tony Aldeguer, manager of Bautista, so the power punching ALA boy can fight again in Honolulu. The 18-year-old Bautista, who is currently taking a rest in his hometown in Candijay, Bohol, impressed American fight fans when he broke the jaw of Aree Phosuwangym of Thailand during their fight at the Neal Blaisdell Arena in Honolulu, Hawaii on March 11. Reports said WBO Asia-Pacific president Leon Panoncillo, in a casual meeting with Bautista at the MGM Grand Hotel during the historic battle between Manny Pacquiao and Erik Morales, told the Filipino that Phosuwangym was still in pain a week after the fight. Former Filipino world champions Ben Villaflor and Rolando Bohol, who were at ringside, were awed by Bautista's youthful power and charisma, the report added. It was former IBF world bantam champion Bohol who donated and handed the trophy to Bautista.

Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor

3-cock derby tonight at Elorde Stadium

ANOTHER exciting 3-cock derby will be held today at 7 p.m. at the Elorde Cockpit Stadium. At least 50 well-known participants have confirmed their entries in the event promoted by Voltes V. Cash Prize of P200,000 is at stake for an entry fee of P4,400. The winning handler and gaffer will receive P5,000 and P10,000, respectively. Minimum bet is of P3,300. For information, contact 8264463 and 8209543 and look for Rene Pineda.

RACING TIPS

AT SANTA ANA BY MR. 999

Race 1—1. Please Don't Stop 2. Love and Money 3. Revelation 4. Princess Adarna

Race 2—1. Ocean Deep 2. Playing Cool 3. Dancing Slew 4. Aminin

Race 3—1. Fastteller 2. Skip Away 3. Sir Lawrence 4. Something Silver 5. Samahan

Race 4—1. Don Paolo/San Diego Force 2. Semper Spirit 3. Hazmagic 4. La Tondeña/Balwarte

Race 5—1. Sir Pierre 2. College Gem 3. Well Noted/Parrot Moe 4. Sweet Talk 5. Diabolo Don

Race 6—1. Sunline 2. Calypso 3. Cara Dura 4. Sandpit Hero

Race 7—1. Si Isidro Ko 2. Magical Charm 3. Western Dancer 4. Graceful Conqueror

Race 8—1. Real Black 2. Solomioh 3. Dashing 4. C'est Moi 5. Honoree 6. I Don't Dance

Lonard tops Heritage Classic

TORONTO—Australia's Peter Lonard showcased his survival skills during a rollercoaster final round at the Heritage Classic on Sunday, claiming a maiden PGA Tour win that he literally thought he would never see.

Having contracted Ross River Fever, a mosquito-borne disease that affects eyesight, Lonard was forced to give up full time tournament play in 1994 and take a job working as a club pro at Oatlands Golf Club in his native Sydney.

Over a decade of hard graft later, Lonard's determination was on full display at the Harbour Town Golf Links in Hilton Head, South Carolina where he clawed his way to an untidy final round four-over 75 to hang on for a two-stroke victory.

"That happened probably almost 10, 11, 12 years ago, so it's taken me that long to actually win one," said Lonard, thinking back to when he was diagnosed with the debilitating virus.

"It's been a long road," he added.

"I was playing in Europe when I was 23, 24, hoping to emulate the (Greg) Normans and the (Ian) Baker-Finches and the guys that came ahead of me.

"I was hoping to play in Europe for a few years and then move over to America and take on the PGA Tour.

"The next thing I'm selling chocolate bars and sausage rolls in a pro shop.

"I think working for a living is overrated, so it's amazing how much you start practicing and training when you actually have to work.

"It's something you wonder if you'll ever get to, to win, and it's a great feeling."

For a while during Sunday's final round it appeared neither Lonard nor playing partner Darren Clarke were interested in claiming the $5.2 million event.

Blistering style

The closing 18 holes featured wild swings in momentum and fortune from start to finish, with Britain's Clarke launching his victory bid in blistering style with four birdies in his first five holes.

His opening surge put him four strokes clear

Nets halt Sixers' entry to playoffs

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey—Vince Carter had 43 points, Jason Kidd registered his 67th career triple-double and the New Jersey Nets took control of their playoff destiny with a 104-83 win over Philadelphia on Sunday that prevented the 76ers' from clinching a berth in the National Basketball Association post-season.

Kidd finished with 11 points, 16 assists and 10 rebounds as the Nets won for the 13th time in 17 games to move into a tie with eighth-place Cleveland (40-40), a game behind Philadelphia (41-39) in the race for the final two playoff spots in the Eastern Conference. Each team has two games remaining.

The 76ers, who missed the playoffs last season, can clinch one of the berths with either a win or a Nets' or Cleveland loss. Philadelphia has home games with Milwaukee and Atlanta on Monday and Wednesday, respectively.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Detroit overcame LeBron James' 37 points, 11 rebounds and six assists to beat Cleveland, 90-87, and extend its winning streak to 10 games.

Cleveland has lost three straight and six of eight, and is in danger of finishing ninth in the Eastern Conference, behind New Jersey and Philadelphia, and out of the playoffs.

The Cavaliers needed a 3-pointer to send the game into overtime, but James shot an airball over Tayshaun Prince just before the buzzer from above the key.

In Toronto, Boston celebrated its first Atlantic Division title in 13 years after Paul Pierce scored 25 points to lead the Celtics past Toronto, 103-98.

The Celtics won their first division title since Larry Bird's final season in 1991-92 when Philadelphia lost to New Jersey just minutes before Boston finished off the Raptors.

Mavericks 114, Lakers 112

In Los Angeles, Dirk Nowitzki had 24 points and eight rebounds, Michael Finley added 20 points, and Dallas held off Los Angeles for its seventh straight victory and 14th in 16 games since Avery Johnson took over as head coach.

Jason Terry added 17 points and 10 assists for the Mavericks (56-24), who have two games remaining before entering the playoffs with the third-best record in the Western Conference.

The Lakers have lost four straight, 17 of 19 and will miss the playoffs for the first time since 1994 and just the fifth in franchise history. They finished with a 22-19 record at home — their worst in 11 years.

In Washington, Antawn Jamison's fortuitous layup with 1.3 seconds remaining gave Washington a 106-104 comeback victory over Charlotte.

In Minneapolis, Ray Allen scored 34 points and Rashard Lewis added 28 and Seattle eliminated Minnesota, 109-94, from the Western Conference playoff race.

Heat 84, Pacers 80

In Miami, Miami ended a four-game losing streak and beat Indiana for the first time in 12 regular-season games, playing most of the game without the injured Shaquille O'Neal.

Shaquille O'Neal scored 11 points in 17 minutes, leaving shortly before halftime with a bruised right thigh — courtesy of an inadvertent knee by Jermaine O'Neal, who was activated after missing Indiana's last 22 contests because of a shoulder injury.

In New York, Tyronn Lue scored eight of his 32 points in overtime and Atlanta won the NBA's highest-scoring game, 139-135, this season.

In Portland, Oregon, Ruben Patterson scored 23 points to lead Portland past Utah, 100-82, in a battle between lottery-bound teams.

AP

CARTER does a thunderous reverse dunk during the fi

YANKEES' Hideki Matsui races down the first base line as he belts out an infield hit against the Orioles. REUTERS

Tejada hits 8th career sweep Yankees; Marin

BALTIMORE—Miguel Tejada hit his eighth career grand slam, and the Baltimore Orioles roughed up Kevin Brown to complete a three-game sweep of the New York Yankees with an 8-4 victory Sunday.

The Yankees, in last place in Major League Baseball AL East division, have lost four straight and eight of 10, prompting an angry response from club owner George Steinbrenner.

"Enough is enough. I am bitterly disappointed as I'm sure all Yankee fans are by the lack of performance by our team," Steinbrenner said in a statement issued immediately after the game.

"It is unbelievable to me that the highest-paid team in baseball would start the se in such a deep funk. They are not playin true Yankees. They have the talent to wi they are not winning. I expect Joe Torre complete coaching staff and the team to this around."

In Chicago, Ichiro Suzuki and Raul Ib homered, and Adrian Beltre had a tiebr ing, two-run single to lead Seattle over C go, 5-4.

In Boston, Tim Wakefield gave the Red their third straight strong start to lead Bo to a 3-1 victory and a three-game swe Tampa Bay, which went hitless for the seven innings.

The Red Sox won their fourth consec

Koronadal City hosting National Dance Congress

KORONADAL CITY—Some 1,000 dance artists, teachers and trainers will converge for the first time in this bustling city as the province plays host to the 13th National Dance Congress on April 28-30 at the South Cotabato Gymnasium and Cultural Center here.

The congress, which will be highlighted by the International Dance Day celebration on the second day of the three-day affair, will be the biggest event the province will be staging in years—thanks to the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

The NCCA has chosen the province to host the event for vigorously promoting dance sports and other dance forms—ballet, folk, jazz and contemporary.

Among the notable performers invited in the International Dance Day are the Philippine Bayanihan Dance Company, Power Dance, the Philippine Ballet Theater and the Quezon City Ballet.

Local dance groups such as Kahayag Community Dance and Theater Company, Me'dal Kolon Datal Dance and Theatre Ensemble, CyberCrew, T'boli's Seslong Dance Troupe and the NDMU Kariktan Dance Troupe will also show their stuff in the event that has "Why Dance 3" as a theme.

Respected names in the local dance scene will also be invited to be the event's resource persons and facilitators on the different disciplines.

Plenary sessions will be followed by workshops to enhance further understanding of dance and its primary objectives of national development through cultural and artistic perspectives. Congress fee is P500, inclusive of kits.

For details, contact the 13th National Dance Congress Provincial Secretariat at the ACTS Office, 3rd Floor, South Cotabato Gymnasium and Cultural Center, City of Koronadal, South Cotabato or call 083-2283-447 and look for Ms Dinky Cagaanan and Onyok Sulit.

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or 1st PGA victory

of the Australian, who opened with bogeys on the first two holes.

However, just as quickly as the Northern Irishman began he suddenly lost his way on the tight fairways and small greens.

A dropped shot at the par-four sixth was the start of a dismal run over the final 13 holes, which Clarke covered in nine over par with three double-bogeys, four bogeys and a solitary birdie at the par-four 12th.

"I sort of think golf is a matter of survival," Lonard said.

"It's sort of nice for the top five to win $10 million and stuff, but if you're not winning $10 million, this game is one of survival.

"There's a fine line between making a lot of money out here and making nothing and having to get a job.

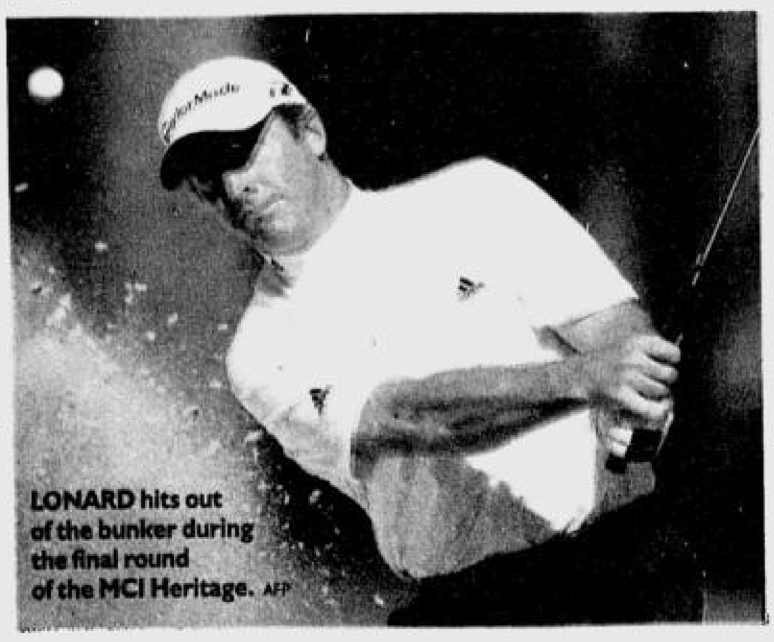
"Obviously I didn't win it the way I wanted to win it today, but at the end of the day, if you win, you win.

"That's the way I'm going—that's what I'm going to take out of it."

Lonard will also take $936,000, a tartan blazer and a huge amount of satisfaction from the win having silence sceptics who said he could never win in the US.

"I can actually afford my house," Lonard added. "It's the first step of what I've always wanted to do.

"You know, it's something I didn't think I was ever going to get to do 10 years ago." *Reuters*



LONARD hits out of the bunker during the final round of the MCI Heritage. AFP

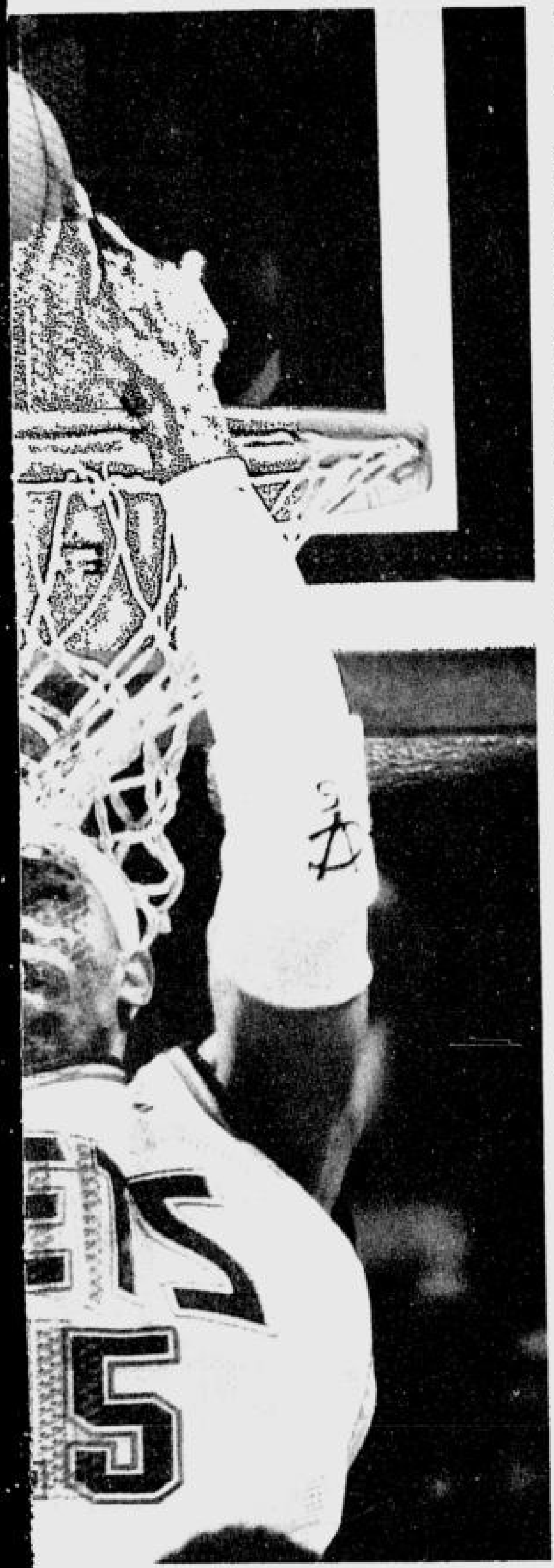
Hanson wins

CADIZ, Spain—Sweden's Peter Hanson claimed his maiden European Tour title after dominating countryman and close friend Peter Gustafsson in a playoff here at the Spanish Open in Andalucia Sunday.

Hanson, who took a share of the lead on opening day and held on to top spot until the last round, carded a second successive 71 on the par-72 course but was forced to a playoff on the 18th hole by Gustafsson's gutsy 66.

Both players found the fairway with their tee shots on the extra hole, and both continued with similar shots which pulled left close to the bunker.

Gustafsson's hopes of carrying on his stunning form came undone when he chipped his third shot to within 12 feet of the hole. Hanson's effort rolled to within two feet of the pin. *AFP*



rst quarter of the New Jersey-Philadelphia game. AFP

Nadal leads tennis teen invasion

MONTE CARLO—The evolution of men's tennis took another leap forward in Monte Carlo last week when two 18-year-olds showed they are equipped to challenge the sport's established hierarchy.

Spanish left-hander Rafael Nadal became the youngest winner of the prestigious Masters Series claycourt tournament since Mats Wilander in 1983 and is already a favorite for this year's French Open.

French qualifier Richard Gasquet may be a little way behind his fellow 18-year-old, but his performance in ending world number one Roger Federer's 25-match winning streak in the quarter-finals was breathtaking.

While Gasquet is still a work in progress after a rocky start to life on the Tour, Nadal looks certain to challenge at the game's highest level.

He has the best record on clay this year, with three titles already under his belt, and came within two games of beating Federer earlier this month in the final of the Masters Series in Miami.

"That was a great match for me because he's going to be a great player, we'll see a lot from him in the future," four-time grand slam champion Federer said after their Miami showdown.

The 23-year-old Swiss also got a first-hand look at Gasquet in Monte Carlo and believes the French player has the tools to challenge for major titles, providing the hype does not weigh to heavily on his shoulders.

Great expectations

Gasquet burst on to the scene three years ago as a 15-year-old at Monte Carlo, gaining a wildcard into qualifying before beating tough Argentine Franco Squillari in the first round to become the youngest player to win a main tour match.

Since then he has struggled, languishing at 101 in the world rankings and drawing criticism from a French media desperate to discover the next Yannick Noah.

Nadal, who remembers playing Gasquet as a 13-year-old, said he often used to wonder what had happened to the Frenchman in the past two years.

However, the Spaniard believes Gasquet's victory over Federer will launch him up the rankings with plenty of self-belief.

Getting better

Nadal took his first Masters Series title firmly in his stride, and is already looking at how he can get better.

"I've got lots to improve—my serve, my volley, my slice. When I do that, I think I can win a lot of matches," he said with a hefty slice of understatement.

While Nadal and Gasquet have grabbed the headlines in the past week, there are others waiting in the wings for their chance to break through.

Gael Monfils, another 18-year-old French player, reached the fourth round in Miami last month and looks destined to compete at the highest levels of the game.

Donald Young, the 15-year-old American prodigy who gained wildcards at Indian Wells and Miami this year after becoming the youngest ever winner of the Australian Open junior, also offers a glimpse of an exciting future. *Reuters*

NADAL hits a return to Coria during their Tennis Masters Series final match. AFP

Justine completes comeback from injury

CHARLESTON, South Carolina—Justine Henin-Hardenne cemented her comeback from illness and injury Sunday with a straight-set victory over second-seeded Elena Dementieva in the $1.3 million WTA clay court tournament here.

The former world number one from Belgium, now ranked 34th in the world and unseeded at this prestigious tier one tournament, defeated Dementieva 7-5, 6-4 in just her second start of 2005.

Henin-Hardenne's determination was evident as she battled back from a 3-5 deficit in the opening set, winning eight of the next nine games for a 7-5, 4-1 lead.

Indeed Dementieva, ranked fifth in the world, kept up the pressure, holding a set point against Henin-Hardenne's serve in the 10th game of the opening set that she surrendered when Henin-Hardenne's forehand, originally called wide, was ruled by the chair umpire to have kissed the line.

Henin-Hardenne held in that game to level the set at 5-5, broke and held again to wrap up the set with a forehand winner on her first set point.

Dementieva gave up the first game of the second set with a double fault on break point, but immediately broke back for 1-1.

Then came another streak of three games for Henin-Hardenne, before Dementieva clawed her way back.

The Russian, playing in her first final of 2005, put together her own string of three games in a row to level the set at 4-4 before surrendering another service break.

It was Henin-Hardenne's second Charleston title, after a victory over American Serena Williams in the 2003 final.

Henin-Hardenne claimed her first title since the Athens Olympics last August, and her first title on the regular WTA Tour circuit since winning at Indian Wells in March of 2004. *AFP*

slam as O's
ers triumph

game, scoring only in the third inning off Scott Kazmir (0-1) on Edgar Renteria's second homer and Jay Payton's two-run single.

Wakefield (2-0) allowed one run and four hits in six innings, improving to 10-0 against the Devil Rays since they beat him April 16, 1999, in Boston. The knuckleballer's five strikeouts pushed him past Cy Young and into third place on Boston's career list with 1,343. He trails Roger Clemens (2,590).

In Cleveland, Travis Hafner was hit by a pitch from J.C. Romero (0-1) with the bases loaded in the eighth inning to force in the go-ahead run, and Cleveland rallied to beat Minnesota, 2-1, and snap the Twins six-game winning streak. *AP*

Masters Diamond 10K honors veteran runner

VETERAN marathoner Deo Arce celebrates his 75th birthday this year and in tribute to him, a Masters Diamond 10K run is scheduled on Sunday, April 24, at the Cuenca Community Center in Ayala Alabang Village in Muntinlupa.

Arce, who only took up running at the age of 51 and has not stopped since then, has competed in a number of local and international marathons, including the PAL Manila International Marathon, the Pilipinas Third World marathon, and the 1997 Honolulu Marathon, not to mention countless shorter distances local road races. He is plant manager of a thread factory in Lipa, Batangas.

The race will only be open to runners 35 years old or older for men and 30 years and above for women. It will consist of two loops around the block of Cuenca Street-Country Club Drive-Acacia Street starting at 6 a.m.

Organized by TRAP president Tom Carrasco Jr. for his longtime running buddy, the PowerBar-backed event will have the 35 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, 60 to 69, and 70 and above age groups.

Participants will be limited to the first 150 registrants and Carrasco is advising interested runners to register early as entry fee would be P400 for late registrants. Fee includes finishers-T-shirts and breakfast, while the top 3 finishers in the different age groups will receive medals.

Registration centers are the TRAP office at unit 1603 Cityland Tower in Makati, TRAP head office at Rm. 202 Bldg. Alpha in ULTRA, or POC office at the RMSC.

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JONES struggles to the finish line. REUTERS

Jones lands last in race

WALNUT, California—Embattled American sprinter Marion Jones struggled in her first race since the 2004 Athens Olympics, finishing a distant last in the 400 meters at the Mt. SAC Relays on Sunday.

The 29-year-old American lumbered across the finish line in 55.03 seconds, more than three seconds adrift of winner Novlene Williams who clocked 51.49.

Lashinda Demus finished second in 51.79, while 2003 world 400m hurdles champion Jana Pittman of Australia, was third in 52.33.

Jones' time was well off her personal best of 49.59 in the 400m which she set in Mt. SAC in 2000.

Jones, winner of five medals at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, came away from the Athens Summer Games empty-handed, another blow in a 2004 season in which she was dogged by doping allegations.

If Sunday's result is any indication then the former darling of US athletics is in for a tough season. *AFP*

FLYING JIN
American Mark Lopez (left) jumps for a kick against Korean Song Seob-Myeong during the men's under-67 kg final at the World Taekwondo Championships in Madrid Sunday. AP

Runnex-Powerbar Anniversary Run up

THE RUNNING Executives of the Philippines (Runnex), the country's oldest and most organized running club based at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City, will hold its anniversary run on May 15.

Dubbed as the Runnex-PowerBar Anniversary Run, the event is expected to attract more than a thousand runners in both the 16k and the 10k events that will start and finish inside the UP Diliman grounds.

Now on its 22nd year, Runnex has evolved into an entity involved in sports development, community and environmental concerns. The club organizes year-round running clinics open to the public, and at the same time conducts humanitarian projects and improvement programs.

"Our members, who are all professionals and executives, including lawyers, doctors, engineers, businessmen and entrepreneurs, train year-round and have participated in both local and international events," said Runnex president Fidel Ringor. "We have participated in marathons in New York, Athens, Melbourne, Hongkong, Singapore while locally, we have gone as far as Cagayan de Oro, Davao, Cebu and Bacolod."

"We are proud to be partners with Runnex for their anniversary this year," said PowerBar Brand Manager Raul Cuevas. The event is also supported by Viva Mineral Water, Funchums, RFM, Dr. J rubbing alcohol, Lifenet Insurance, St. Stephanie Construction, Great Domestic Insurance and Besh Garment. Registration is on for an entry fee of P175, inclusive of a finisher's T-shirt.

Lance could settle questions about retirement

ATLANTA—Lance Armstrong is set to make an announcement Monday that is expected to settle questions on whether he will retire from cycling after this summer's Tour de France, where he will try for a seventh straight title.

Earlier this month, Armstrong called retirement "a possibility" and said "I am still thinking about that." His representatives would not discuss his plans Sunday.

"Lance is going to make an announcement tomorrow," said Mark Higgins, a spokesperson for Capital Sports Entertainment, which represents Armstrong. "Everybody is anxious to hear it. He's kind of keeping it under wraps."

Dan Osipow, a spokesperson for Armstrong's Tailwind Sports racing team, said: "We'll let the man speak for himself."

Armstrong's announcement will come as a prelude to the Tour de Georgia, a race he won last year. The six-day, 1,042-km event begins Tuesday in Augusta. *AP*

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SAHARA
1:15 / 4:00 / 6:45 / 9:30
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April 30, Saturday

CENTER EVENTS

SALE EVENTS
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Perfect Pitch Summer Swing Out Sale ongoing until April 30 at Ali Mall

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synopsis:
"Boso", shot on a digital video, is a sexy dark comedy about Jake, caretaker of a boarding house by day and a peeping-Tom by night. In a place filled with twisted characters and absurd lives, he oversees each tenant's secrets, daily routines and private world.
Jake continues "playing God" until he meets and falls for Cecilia, a woman who makes him realize the essence of beauty - unseen by the eyes. Later, a tragic accident leads to an unexpected twist and dramatic confrontation.

APRIL 13-19

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6 GOLD (SDDS) PACIFIER
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Faith TV born again

CANNES—The death of Pope John Paul II, President George W. Bush's strong Christian beliefs and the aftermath of Sept. 11 are fueling new demand around the world for faith-based television programs, TV executives say.

Shows such as "The Man Who Would Be The Pope," a Hollywood-style TV mini series based on the life of John Paul II, historical dramas about Joan of Arc and famous saints plus a glimpse of life inside the Vatican by the late Pontiff's close confidant Cardinal Ratzinger were the unexpected hot tickets at the international MIPTV/MILIA audiovisual trade show that closed here Friday.

Serious hunt

"People are very interested in understanding different faiths as well as their own," said Madeline McEneney, head of sales at Faith and Values Media whose shows air on the 24-hour cable Hallmark Channel in the United States.

Pope-related programs were on top of many MIPTV buyers' lists after millions of TV viewers worldwide tuned in to watch the recent funeral of John Paul II.

TV buyers were also seriously on the hunt for a wide range of faith-based material.
AFP

Katherine de Castro not ...

From page A29

ear park under Manila Mayor **Lito Atienza's** "Buhayin ang Maynila" program. People from all walks of life now flock there... makes you proud that you're Pinoy.

Back to Korina's show ... Sen. **Mar Roxas** popped up before taping was done. Afterwards, they had barbecue at Café Adriatico right there in Baywalk. The couple gamely posed for pictures with kibitzers. Will they ride off into the Manila Bay sunset soon as man and wife?

Erratum

I WAS swamped with e-mail (even from readers abroad) about the **Mark Gil** item in my previous column. I'm surprised that so many people noticed the typo error. Shame on me for overlooking that part. I wrote that Mark had 2 kids with **Bing Loyzaga** (my apologies to **Janno Gibbs** & Bing). It should have read, "with **Bing Pimentel** (a former model and schoolmate of mine). It so happened that I was in the middle of verifying some info. regarding Janno and Bing's marital woes while typing the story about Mark Gil so I got it mixed up. Mea culpa! Thanks to all my readers who took the time to e-mail me. It only goes to show that Pinoys are really sharp when it comes to show biz stuff. (he..he..he..)

For feedback e-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com)

ANTONIA Julia Sofia Babao

Katherine de Castro not keen on politics

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

ALLOW me to give way to the letter of **Katherine de Castro.** The charming daughter of **Vice President Noli** just wants to set the record straight. She is following in her dad's footsteps in broadcasting but definitely not in politics. I know what it's like to have a famous parent. It ain't easy, especially if you're in the same field. You're given little leeway for mistakes. You gotta try harder to establish your own identity. But in the long run, it's worth it. There comes a time when you're out of your parent's shadow and they proudly watch you make your own light and shine on your own. That's where Kat is right now. No wonder VP Noli is all smiles

* * *

Dear Dolly,

For quite some time, I haven't been able to report for "TV Patrol," and I've been absent from "Magandang Gabi... Bayan" for like two Saturdays already (leaving **Erwin Tulfo** all by his lonesome to do the hosting).

Apparently, some people have begun to think that I'm following my Dad's "political path" by representing him in some official functions which he can't attend. I just want to make it clear that I am still very much [an ABS-CBN] Kapamilya and I'll be back at work on the third week of April (both for "TV Patrol" and "MGB"). The reason for my absence is, I've been in and out of St. Luke's Hospital. I suffered from dehydration due to weight loss (believe it or not, I'm really working hard to lose a few pounds). *Pero ha,* I'm not bulimic or anything. My weight loss program has something to do with placing a gastric balloon inside my tummy so I'd feel half full all the time and therefore, *mababawasan ang kain ko.* It was **Dr. Joel Mendez, Dr. Feliciano Agas** and **Dr. Gil Dineros** who introduced me to that type of weight loss program. *Kasi* some people think na just because VP *na si* Dad, *eh ganun din ako.* No way! *Wala akong balak magpulitika. Kahit* as early as now, *maraming gustong isama ako sa* roster of councilors *nila.* I've rejected each offer because I'm very much happy with my broadcasting career. God Bless you and take care always.

Katkat

Li'l Baby Babao

JULIUS Babao and **Tintin Bersola** are all agog preparing for the baptism of their firstborn, **Antonia Julia Sophia.** Their wedding was like a fairytale. You can just imagine what the proud dad and mom are cooking up for the christening of their *unica hija* on May 21 at Fernwood Gardens! The "grand ball" of the Babao's li'l princess will be handled by Visions & Ideas. Tin says, beaming, "The 20 pairs of godparents are in for a meaningful surprise. Star of the Mongolian buffet and Pinoy fusion lunch is the chocolate fountain by Josiah's catering. I've never been this excited in my entire life! Inexplicable joy *talaga ang may* baby!" Motherhood... Tintin wears it well even when it wears her out.

Isn't it ironic that Senator **Jinggoy Estrada** is the spokesperson for **Richard Gomez** regarding his tax evasion case? Not too long ago, they had a major brawl during a Star Olympics basketball game. It's good to know, though, that each one is gentleman enough to bury the hatchet. Oh well ... no permanent friends, no permanent enemies in show biz; only permanent interests. Not to mention scandals and intrigues, huh?

Korina at Baywalk

KORINA Sanchez taped the next episode of her popular show "Rated K" in Baywalk—the promenade at Roxas Boulevard seawall. Enough of those inane Baywalk beauties who have endless word wars with other starlets on TV. It's time to focus on the splendor of Baywalk itself. Catch it all on Korina's program this Sunday.

The seawall was once a favorite recreation spot—the best location to watch Manila Bay's world-famous sunset. About a decade ago, people stopped going there because it had become dark and dingy, and had been transformed into a hangout of different negative elements of society.

In 2002, the Roxas Boulevard seawall came alive again with its redevelopment into a lin

KATHERINE/ A28

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1	SAMARA RING 2 12:35, 3:10, 5:45 8:20 10:50, PG -13
2	SAHARA 11:55, 2:45, 5:35 8:25, 11:05 PG -13
3	WEDDING DATE 11:10, 1:30, 3:50 6:10, 8:30, 10:50 PG 13
4	FINDING NEVERLAND 12:05, 2:15, 4:25 6:35, 8:45, 10:55 GP

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FINDING NEVERLAND GP 12:40,3:00,5:20,7:40,10:00	THE SPONGEBOB MOVIE GP 1:25,3:35,5:45,7:55,10:05	SAHARA PG13 12:15,2:45,5:15,7:45,10:20
THE RING 2 PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:10	HIDE AND SEEK PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:10	WEDDING DATE PG13 12:00,2:00,4:00, 6:00,8:00,10:00

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CINEMA 1 THE WEDDING DATE
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PG13

CINEMA 2 FINDING NEVERLAND
11:10, 1:25, 3:35, 5:45, 7:55, 10:10
GP

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① WEDDING DATE
MTRCB: PG-13
12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50

② THE RING 2 (SAMARA)
MTRCB: PG-13
11:30, 2:05, 4:40, 7:15, 9.50

③ THE SPONGEBOB
MTRCB: GP
12:15, 2.25, 4:35, 6:45, 9:00

④ SAHARA
MTRCB: PG-13
1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00

PREMIERE THEATRE FINDING NEVERLAND
MTRCB. GP 12 40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
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8:40 / 10:10 LFS / 10:40 LMF / 12:10 END
2. FINDING NEVERLAND
12:00 FS / 12:20 MF
2:00 LFS / 2:30 LMF / 4:10 END
☎ 633-8976

sm megamall cinema 1
HIDE AND SEEK
12:05 FS / 12:40 MF / 2.55 / 5:10
7:25 / 9:05 LFS / 9:40 LMF / 11:20 END
☎ 633-1001

sm cebu cinema 1
SAMARA: RING 2
12:00 FS / 12:18 MF / 2:36 / 4:54 / 7:12
9:12 LFS / 9:30 LMF / 11:30 END
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METRO MANILA

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1 HIDE AND SEEK
2 SAMARA: RING 2
3 FINDING NEVERLAND
4 SAHARA
5 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
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7 CLOSER
8 THE PACIFIER
9 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
10 RESERVED
11 RESERVED
12 RESERVED

sm city fairview
1 HIDE AND SEEK
2 BOOGEYMAN
3 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
4 SAHARA
5 THE WEDDING DATE
6 FINDING NEVERLAND
7 SAMARA: RING 2
8 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
9 THE PACIFIER
10 ROBOTS
11 LOVE ME IF YOU DARE
12 BAHAY NI LOLA 2

sm city north edsa
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
4 THE WEDDING DATE
5 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
6 FINDING NEVERLAND
7 SAHARA
8 SAMARA: RING 2

sm city manila
1 THE WEDDING DATE
2 THE PACIFIER
3 FINDING NEVERLAND
4 SAHARA
5 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
6 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
7 ALONE IN THE DARK
8 CLOSER
9 SAMARA: RING 2
10 BOOGEY MAN
11 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
12 HIDE AND SEEK

sm city sta. mesa
1 SAMARA: RING 2
2 THE WEDDING DATE
3 FINDING NEVERLAND
4 RESERVED
5 RESERVED
6 BOOGEYMAN
7 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
8 SAHARA
9 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
10 THE PACIFIER

sm city southmall
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 SAMARA: RING 2
4 THE WEDDING DATE
5 HIDE AND SEEK
6 THE PACIFIER
7 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
8 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
9 SAHARA
10 FINDING NEVERLAND

sm city bicutan
1 SAHARA
2 THE WEDDING DATE
3 SAMARA: RING 2
4 ONG BAK: THA THAI WARRIOR

sm cinema tutuban
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

sm supercenter sucat
1 SAMARA: RING 2
2 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
3 SAHARA
4 THE WEDDING DATE

LUZON

sm city pampanga
1 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
2 FINDING NEVERLAND
3 HOSTAGE
4 CLOSER
5 BOOGEYMAN
6 THE PACIFIER

sm city baguio
1 BE COOL
2 SAMARA: RING 2
3 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
4 THE PACIFIER

sm city batangas
1 HIDE AND SEEK
2 CLOSER
3 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
4 FINDING NEVERLAND

sm city dasmariñas
1 FINDING NEVERLAND
2 BE COOL
3 THE WEDDDING DATE
4 SAMARA: RING 2

sm city marilao
1 FINDING NEVERLAND
2 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD
3 THE PACIFIER
4 BE COOL

sm city bacoor
1 HIDE AND SEEK
2 FINDING NEVERLAND
3 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
4 SAMARA: RING 2
5 SAHARA
6 THE PACIFIER
7 THE WEDDING DATE
8 MS. CONGENIALITY 2

sm city lucena
1 HOSTAGE
2 FINDING NEVERLAND
3 FINAL CUT
4 MS. CONGENIALITY 2

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

sm city cebu
1 HITCH
2 RESERVED
3 THE PACIFIER
4 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
5 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
6 SAMARA: RING 2
7 HOSTAGE
8 SAHARA

sm city iloilo
1 CONFIDENCE
2 RESERVED
3 BE COOL
4 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD
5 HOSTAGE
6 CLOSER
7 RESERVED
8 ALONE IN THE DARK

sm city davao
1 SAHARA
2 CONFIDENCE
3 SON OF THE MASK 2
4 BE COOL
5 CLOSER
6 HOSTAGE

sm city cagayan de oro
1 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
2 ROBOTS
3 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
4 HOSTAGE

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 1045 Series of 2005

LVN for sale

By Clarrisa S. Batino
Business

Three groups vie for the film processing company; one is confident that local film trade could be revived

LVN Pictures Inc., a film industry pioneer founded by the legendary Narcisa "Doña Sisang" de Leon in the 1940s, is now for sale.

After it stopped producing movies towards the 1960s, the company found its niche in film processing and post-production services. It is one of the country's top two such facilities (the other one is Roadrunner, owned by the Lopezes of ABS-CBN).

During its first two decades of operations, LVN produced more than 400 movies and was home to the biggest stars of the '40s and the '50s.

Sources have identified three parties interested in buying the film processing and printing laboratory.

These are Video Post, also a subsidiary of ABS-CBN Corp.; Regal Films of Lily Monteverde; and Stages Production Specialists Inc. represented by Butch Jimenez. Tony Gloria of Unitel Pictures and Unitel Productions reportedly expressed intent at first but, sources said, lost interest.

June shutdown

The management of LVN Pictures Inc. earlier advised employees that it would close shop by the end of June. Sources said the company was hit by the declining output of the film industry.

LVN Pictures reportedly services nearly 90 percent of the processing and printing requirements of the movie industry. If the company folds up, according to the sources, many producers will have to go overseas—to Thailand, Hong Kong or Singapore—to process and print their films. This means increased expense for these producers and/or decreased film output.

Jimenez, a scion of one of the owners of GMA Network Inc. and head of the retail group of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., said his group's bid for LVN Pictures was independent of GMA and PLDT.

"I would also like to deny any speculation that my boss, Mr. Manuel V. Pangilinan, or PLDT ... is also involved," said Jimenez in an interview.

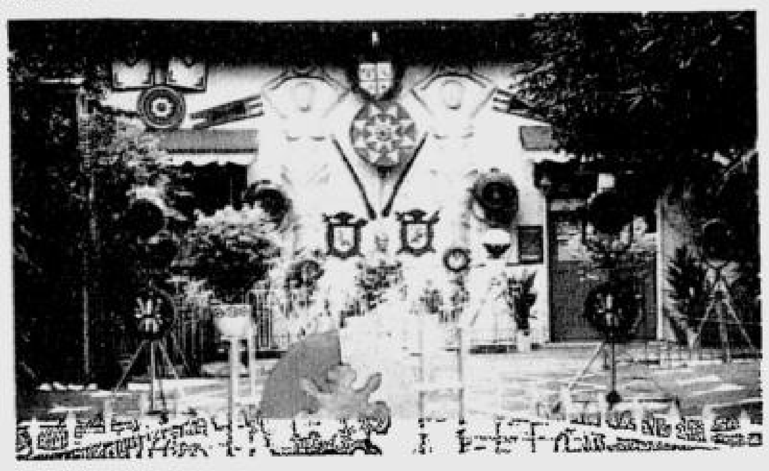
He said the group would have to look for a new location within Quezon City if they win in the bidding.

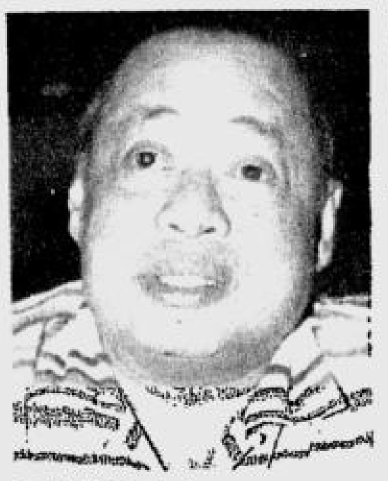
"It really isn't important to me whether my group wins the bid or not. What is of primary importance is that the Philippines doesn't lose this processing and printing lab. If [that happens], I wouldn't be surprised if the movie industry dies altogether," Jimenez stressed.

But Jimenez is confident that the local movie industry could turn around in the same way that Thailand and South Korea revived their own movie industries.

The local movie trade is beset by diverse concerns including competition with foreign films, piracy, TV and cable shows, and rising costs. At its peak, the local industry was coming out with more than 250 movies yearly. The number is currently down to about 30 films.

"The Philippines, which has a deeper wealth of talent than other Asian countries should be able to eventually turn around as well," said Jimenez.


ENTRANCE to LVN studios


PORTES: End of an era

MEILY: Reflection of big picture

REYES: Gov't should move

Top filmmakers lament 'sad day' for RP movies

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Contributor

THE REACTION from the local film community was swift.

Rumors that LVN Pictures, one of the two top post-production firms in the country (the other is Roadrunner), was for sale had been circulating for over a month now.

According to sources from within the company, management was set to hold a board meeting yesterday and a formal announcement on the firm's future would be made today.

But talk had long been widespread that LVN employees had been notified of the company's forthcoming shutdown in June.

We asked film artists and personalities for their random thoughts on this vital industry development.

Gil Portes
Filmmaker

"If LVN closes, it will be the end of an era ... a great era! Although it stopped producing films a long time ago, the LVN Color Laboratory has been a constant reminder of excellent filmmaking. 'Anak Dalita,' 'Badjao' and 'Portrait of an Artist as a Filipino' are only some of the movies that the mother company produced. On the other hand, the Color Laboratory contributed a lot to the 'glory' days of Philippine cinema! The laboratory was our tool in telling the varied stories of our people. It will be missed! What a sad day for cinema lovers."

Jose Javier Reyes
Filmmaker

"So how can we not deny that the movie industry is dying? If this is true, it is not just a blow... it is a major blow to the continuation of the local movie industry as we know it. It is a question of survival. If we lose a top film processing company now, it will undoubtedly be a big setback in terms of morale and costs of production. How can you have a movie industry without a local post-production firm?"

Mark Meily
Filmmaker

"It is a reflection of what is happening to our country: *Naghihikahos* (Barely surviving.) If LVN ceases operations, expect the whole industry (as we know it) to follow suit and die. Whoever buys LVN will hold the key to the lifeblood of Philippine cinema."

Ed Instrella
Talent Manager/Line Producer

"LVN can be saved by well-meaning lovers of cinema like Tony Gloria (of Unitel) and Butch Jimenez (of PLDT). What is urgently needed, however, is for the government to listen to the entire industry, to make movies its top priority. All the concerned sectors in the industry should participate in a dialogue, minus the politicking. Also, industry leaders should impose restraint and discipline on everyone, most especially the TV networks. LVN's fate is but one manifestation of the disease that is infecting the whole industry right now."

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Tuesday, April 19, 2005

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ABC

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Showbiz No. 1 (4:25 PM)	Yu-Gi-Oh! (5:10 PM)	Naruto (5:35 PM)	Vidjoking	TV Patrol		Kamao	Krystala	Hiram	Spirits	Memories Of Bali	Stained Glass	Bora		Insider
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	EZ Shop	Anime Ring Kasho				Sentro	Lizzie Mcguire	Three Blind Dates		Wow Mali		Big News	The Probe Team Documentaries		Billboard On-Air	
GMA 7		Saang Sulok Ng Langit	Now and Forever	Glass Shoes	One Piece	Hungry Heart	Knockout	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Darna	All About Eve (8:45 PM)	Full House (9:15 PM)		Bahay Mo Ba 'To?			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Score Tactics	The Ring	Cold Cases		Medium		Cold Case		Newswatch Now	Tuesday Night Treat		
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		The Hope 1-Million All Filipino				Rooster Talk	IBC News Tonite	Up Close And Personal	
JackTV		Wwe Raw				Mutant League	Heavy Gear	Maxxed	Dungeons And Dragons	Stargate SG1		Soldier Of Fortune		RHD/LA		The Wire		Oz	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Combo Nick				Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix						Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	Top Of The Pops	MYX Remakes	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Good Morning Miami	Knock First	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Elimidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	JKX	Simple Life	One Tree Hill		Temptation Island		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
Cinema One		War Freak				Trip				Extranghero		Otso-Otso, Pamela-Mela Wan				Mano-Mano 3			
Studio 23				PBL Game 2				Ragnarok	Project Arms	Wazzup Wazzup	Angel			Smallville		News Central	Oprah		The Men's Room
AXN		CSI: Miami		CSI: Miami		Fear Factor (Season V)		7 Days (Season III)		Pensacola (Season III)		Ripley's Believe It or Not		CSI: NY (Season I)		The Amazing Race 7		AXN Shakedown	
Star World	Frasier	The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	Charmed		Wild Card		Miss Match		Friends	Charmed
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic		Air Crash Investigation		Seconds From Disaster		Interpol Investigates		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr. Brady Barr	Wow		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Air Crash Investigation: Deadly Delay/ Amazon Claws		Seconds From Disaster	
Solar Sports	Women's Volleyball '04				Davis Cup '05 France vs Sweden 1st rd.				The Badminton Masters '05 SFinals				NBA TV Daily	NBA Game: Denver @ Phoenix					NBA Inside Stuff
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fixt	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Motto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Passion For Dessert	Guess Who's Coming To Decorate		Look For Less	Life & Style		Clean House		Road & Track	Back To Basics
HBO			Beauty And The Beast			Little Nikita (5:05 PM)			Two Weeks Notice (6:40 PM)				The Craft (8:20 PM)			Six Feet Under 44: That's My Dog		Double Team (10:55PM)	
Star Movies		Cape Fear				Moonlight Mile (5:15 PM)				Nutty Professor II: The Klumps				Le Divorce				Alex & Emma	
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	The Woody Woodpecker Show	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	X-Men Evolution	Codename Kids Next Door	Gundam Wing	Shaman King	The Powerpuff Girls	Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi	Ed, Edd N Eddy (9:15 PM)	Dexter's Laboratory	Time Squad	Thundercats	He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe	Gundam Seed
ESPN				English Premier Football League 2004/05				FA Cup Highlights		ATP Masters Series Highlights		Sportscenter Asia	NBA Anthology Down Low: Life in the D-League	Pool/Snooker Mosconi Cup '04		San Miguel Asian 9 Ball Tour			Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Mr Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	The Sleepover Club	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Buzz Lightyear Of Star Command	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr Bean: The Animated Series	House Of Mouse	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	America's Funniest Home Video	According To Jim	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax			Pal Joey (Frank Sinatra)				Panic Room				Contagious			The Assassin				Decoys (10:50PM)	
Hallmark Channel	Who's The Boss	Just Cause		HCA: The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Mad About You	Who's The Boss	Bewitched	The District		Just Cause		Midsomer Murders: Ring Out Your Dead			Missing (10:35PM)		The District (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Civilisations.				Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Rides		Human Discovery		Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Science Mysteries	
Sports Plus				Arena Football: Colorado @ Chicago						Strongman		World's Greatest Auto Shows		Italia Serie A				Nopi Tunerversion	Bikini Destination
NBN		Taiwan/ Winner TV Shopping		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision		MMDA On The Road		Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Family Rosary Crusade		Paco Park Presents		Auto Focus	

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Editor Emmie G. Velarde

Tribeca film fest comes of age

NEW YORK—The Tribeca Film Festival, founded by actor Robert De Niro after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks to bolster downtown New York's economy, opens tomorrow, Manila time, amid signs it is coming of age, attracting big movies and films from around the world.

The 11-day festival of nearly 250 films kicks off with "The Interpreter," a thriller set in the United Nations by director Sydney Pollack, known for "The Firm," "Out of Africa" and "Three Days of the Condor."

Founded by Robert De Niro after 9/11, the gathering helps New York city get back on its feet

Starring Nicole Kidman and Sean Penn, the high-profile film is the first movie ever shot inside the United Nations headquarters and embraces two key elements of the festival—an international flavor and the diverse energy of New York.

Forty-five countries are represented in the ambitious Tribeca schedule that boasts 59 world premieres among its 158 feature films. A total of 37 movies were shot in New York in a program that includes documentaries, shorts and a number of newly restored classics.

Co-founder Jane Rosenthal said the festival has evolved dramatically since she began it with business partner De Niro.

New memory

"The first year, we did it in response to September 11 and tried to give our neighborhood a new memory and something to look forward to," Rosenthal said about the festival, held in a neighborhood that had been in the shadow of the World Trade Center towers.

The festival, the fourth annual, includes a family film program, street fairs, panel discussions and public showings of the movies. It has drawn nearly a million visitors and resulted in $125 million in economic activity for Lower Manhattan over the first three years, according to the organizers.

Now the festival is standing on its own merit.

"I think the first couple of years filmmakers really didn't know to plan for us," Rosenthal said. "This year feels like the first year that filmmakers are clearly planning for Tribeca. And I think our program reflects that."

Keen watch

Among keenly anticipated movies are "2046" by Wong Kar-Wai of Hong Kong, political documentary "The Power of Nightmares" by Briton Adam Curtis, and US cinema verite pioneer Robert Drew's "From Two Men and a War."

Jonathan Sehring, president of Independent Film Channel, said Tribeca has begun to find its niche.

"There are not many festivals in the United States that really cover what the world cinema offers," said Sehring, giving credit to Tribeca's program director Peter Scarlet.

"It is wide-open territory. I do think it's an area that Tribeca can lay claim to in terms of a profile by showcasing the diversity of world cinema."

Showcasing the legion of independent filmmakers living in New York and taking advantage of the city's creative energy is also part of the festival's mission, said Rosenthal.

That twin ambition is embodied in "Show Business," a world premiere film by Dori Bernstein, which gives an inside look at Broadway plays "Taboo," "Caroline or Change," "Wicked" and "Avenue Q," from their inception through to the Tony Awards.

Although the festival has not yet made a mark on the business of buying and selling films, Rosenthal thinks that may just be a matter of time. In any event, she does not measure success merely by movie deals made.

"What I'm most proud of is the fact that after the worst terror attack on the United States, we are up on our feet and showing the world that we are back, stronger than ever," said Rosenthal. "Not only physically but artistically."

Reuters

WHAT IS A 'MOCKUMENTARY'?
OPENING next month in theaters is director Jeffrey Jeturian's latest sizzler, "Bikini Open." The movie tells the story of participants in a bikini contest. Jeturian describes his treatment as "mockumentary," or fake documentary. His objective? "To satirize public affairs programs that prioritize entertainment rather than news, sometimes at the expense of objectivity and truth." Leading the cast are Diana Zubiri, Rafael Rossell and Alfred Vargas (in photo), Francine Prieto, Nina Ricci Alagao and JE Sison in his first major film outing. The script is written by Cris Martinez under the supervision of Armando "Bing" Lao.

Oprah's book club is bigger and better

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

PARENTS and educators all over the world are bemoaning the fact that many youths are no longer interested in reading, thus compromising their education by distancing them from books that are the source of so much knowledge, wisdom and inspiration.

How do we get our children to like reading books? For that matter, even adults need help in this regard. So, how can most everybody be helped?

Back-to-reading campaigns are OK, but thus far, on point of effectivity, motivation and reach, nothing beats **Oprah Winfrey's** monthly Book Club citations on her popular TV show.

Oprah revived her show's Book Club a couple of months ago, with some important changes instituted. Previously, the club used to favor novels about women. This time around, it boosts even more significant literary works.

Oprah set a high standard for the club when she revived it by highlighting **John Steinbeck's** "East of Eden." The novel is engaged, dense, daring and seminal, not what you would call an easy read.

But Oprah and her club members enthusiastically read it, and perceptively discussed it in public fora, with guest discussants like Kelsey Grammer and Steinbeck's own son, Thomas, also a novelist.

It was impressive to see such importance and "TV power" given to reading, which is usually ignored by other television programs. And yet, Oprah put her show's ratings on the line, and came out a winner because her loyal viewers supported her selfless public service initiative by the millions.

Next on Oprah's reading list is "Cry the Beloved Country," a novel about South Africa and its teeming, tumultuous problems and contradictions. It's an even more rigorous read, but Oprah and her book club members are giving it everything they've got, because they want to prove that they can match engaged novelists' best efforts with their own literary determination and empathy.

Can a local TV host initiate a similar reading campaign on the tube? Here's hoping. Next question: Will local viewers support such a laudable move? Ooops!—Well, it deserves a try, all the same.

Feedback

FROM **Mitch Ville**, Chino Hills, California, USA: "Thanks to the magic of the Internet, though I'm thousands of miles away, I get to read your column every day on inq7.net. I've always respected your opinion because you're one of the few writers there who are really knowledgeable and credible.

"I just want to comment on the so-called 'network wars' I've been reading about: What's forgotten by many is the very commanding presence of the Filipino channel in major countries where there are millions of Pinoys who are completely oblivious of the ongoing ABS-CBN vs GMA war!

OPRAH Winfrey: Selfless public service

"Whether ABS-CBN is No. 1 or not, we don't care. Many of us here are second- or third-generation Pinoys who have been living here for over 20 years. We, plus our children, only see ABS-CBN shows, so we don't know GMA, what it offers, its stars, etc. What has remained important to us is the feeling of being 'at home' when we watch ABS-CBN shows.

"You don't know the joy that TFC has given all of us who work long hours then come home to some refreshing Pinoy TV shows, TFC has also been a source of pleasure for my mom, who is turning 88 this June.

"Bottom line is, for us here overseas, the 'ratings game' is nonexistent, and unimportant. What's essential to us is that we are in 'Pinas' without making that 16-hour trip. Thanks for listening."

'Male Confessions'

WHAT do AJ Dee, Derek Ramsay, Borgy Manotoc, Brent Javier, Paolo Paraiso and Bamboo have in common? They're all gorgeous, objects of women's fantasies, and have secrets to reveal. Those sensual revelations are made visually exciting by director **Connie Macatuno** in the sexy lifestyle video, "Male Confessions."

The video highlights the gorgeous gents' well-toned bodies, stimulating conversation, and steamy exposés. The Star Records Video release is available on VCD and DVD formats.

'Ascension'

BIANCA and Ryan Peralta's "Ascension" album contains nine originals and one revival. The album's carrier is the laid-back "Lipad." Other cuts include "Take Some Time," "Let You Go," "Like The Way," "Turn It Up," "Wait for Me," "Unchoose" and "By My Side." The cover song, "Lean On Me," was made popular in the '80s by Club Nouveau. "Ascension" is available on high-grade cassette and CD at Alpha outlets nationwide.

LOVE VIRUS
The Valentine virus is back this summer with "Qpids," ABS-CBN's newest reality show in the search for the country's next big love team. The brainchild of Laurenti Dyogi, the show is hosted by Anne Curtis and Luis Manzano, and follows nine girls looking for the right guys. Pairs go through a series of adventures to test their chemistry. The gorgeous girls whom 18 hopeful heartthrobs will try to win are: Karel Marquez, Pauleen Luna, Hazel Ann Mendoza, Jill Yulo, Paw Diaz, Vanessa Gomez, Carla Loren, Isabel Blaesi and Andrea Torres.

'Samara' is bore-ring, sorry

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

REVIEW

TO BE honest, I didn't expect much from "Ring 2: Samara," sequel to the Hollywood version of the Japanese horror fave "Ringu."

I hadn't been impressed with Gore Verbinski's 2002 adaptation of the original film, either. "Samara" is a watered-down follow-up despite major changes.

Editing and cinematography are good—this is pretty obvious throughout, but it lacks menace and mystery, the factors that cemented "Ringu's" place in every horror aficionado's heart.

It should be mentioned that perhaps the only intense scene is the one that involved attacking deer. Yes, attacking deer.

Where's the video?

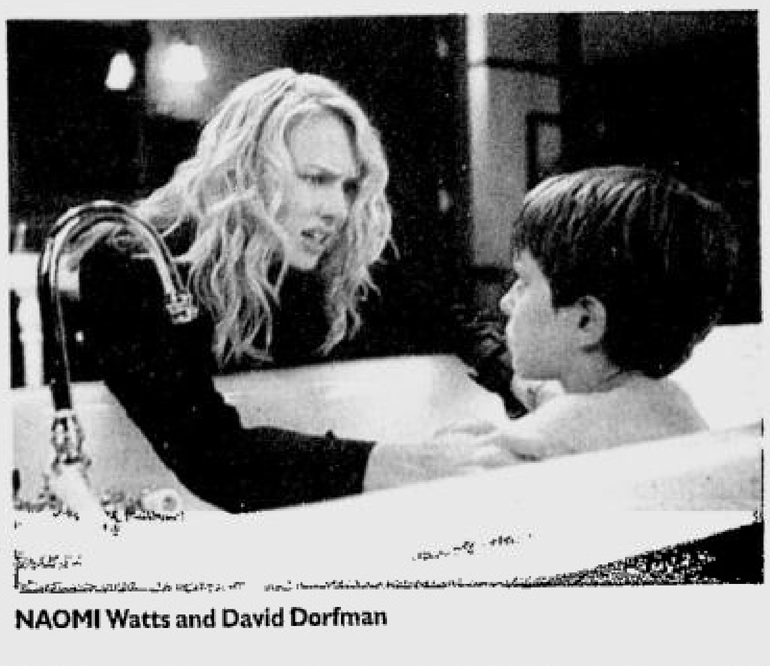
Barely in the plot is the cursed video tape that gives the undead girl access to the homes of adventurous but stupid teens. The tape is taken care of immediately after one death, but no real attention is given to the curse after that, except for the fact that the spook Samara is pissed and wants the journalist Rachel (Naomi Watts) as her mommy. Really.

To achieve this, Samara does her damnedest to possess Rachel's son, Aiden, played by equally creepy but convincing child actor David Dorfman. That's basically the premise here: Samara wants a mommy!

It might have worked if this had been apparent in the first installment.

Formulaic

Because "Ring 2: Samara" is gratingly formulaic, you just know that Rachel's skeptical new co-worker Max (Simon Baker) will bite the dust the soonest possible opportunity. And, as usual, Rachel must fight these incomprehensible forces alone, so of course, we're treated to slow investigative sequences where she barely gets any real answers, making us doze off.



NAOMI Watts and David Dorfman

Let's not even get started on Sissy Spacek's cameo appearance as a loon.

"Ring 2" is deathly bore-ring--sadly, time and my 90 bucks I'll never get back.

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1 THE PACIFIER • THX
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
2 SAMARA - RING 2
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
3 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
11:00 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00
4 ONG BAK
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
5 SAHARA
11:00 1:45 4.30 7:15 10:00
6 THE WEDDING DATE
11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00
7 HIDE AND SEEK
1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
8 BOSO
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00
9 CLOSER
1:25 3:35 5:45 7:55 10:00
10 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

ERMITA
536-7809 to 12

1 SAHARA
11:10 1:40 4:15 6:55 9:40
2 ONG BAK
10:40 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
3 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
10:30 12:25 2:20 4:15 6:10 8.05 10:00
4 THE WEDDING DATE
10:20 12:15 2:10 4:05 6:00 7:55 10:00
5 SAMARA RING 2
10:40 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
6 BOSO
10:40 12:50 3:00 5:10 7:20 9:40
7 HIDE AND SEEK
10:30 12:45 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:45

METRO EAST
682-8193 • 682-8199

1 ONG BAK
11:10 1:40 4:10 6:40 9:10
2 THE PACIFIER
10:50 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00
3 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
10:45 1:15 3.45 6:15 9:00
4 HIDE AND SEEK
11:30 1:50 4:10 6:30 9:00
5 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
10:50 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 8:50 10:30
6 SAMARA RING 2
12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:30
7 SAHARA
11:50 2:30 5:10 7:50 10:30
8 THE WEDDING DATE
10:50 1:10 3:30 5:50 8:10 10:30

NOVALICHES
935-3229/31

1 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
11:00 1:00 3:00 4:50 6:40 8:30
2 SAMARA RING 2
10:20 12:50 3:20 5:50 8:25
3 ASTERIX AND OBELIX
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:10 8:30
4 HIDE AND SEEK
12:50 3:20 5:50 8:25
5 THE WEDDING DATE
11:40 1:50 4:00 6:10 8:25
6 SAHARA
11:50 2:40 5:30 8:25
7 RESERVE
8 RESERVE

PIONEER
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1 SAHARA
2 THE PACIFIER
3 SAMARA RING 2
4 THE WEDDING DATE

CITISQUARE MALABON
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1 BE COOL
2 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
3 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
4 PILUKANG ITIM

CAINTA
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1 ONG BAK
2 SAMARA RING 2
3 SAHARA
4 THE WEDDING DATE

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5 CURSED

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2 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
3 THE WEDDING DATE
4 SAMARA RING 2
5 BOOGEYMAN

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1 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
2 ALONE IN THE DARK
3 CLOSER
4 THE PACIFIER

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2 THE WEDDING DATE
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4 SAMARA RING 2
5 BE COOL
6 SAHARA

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2 BOOGEYMAN
3 THE PACIFIER
4 CLOSER
5 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
6 CURSED

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1 HIDE AND SEEK
2 CLOSER
3 HOSTAGE
4 THE FINAL CUT
5 CURSED
6 SPANGLISH

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3 CLOSER
4 HOSTAGE
5 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD
6 LITTLE BLACK BOOK

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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 SAMARA (RING 2)	2 THE WEDDING DATE	3 SAHARA	4 THE PACIFIER
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 THE WEDDING DATE	2 SAMARA (RING 2)	3 THX HIDE & SEEK 1:10, 3:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR	5 FINDING NEVERLAND	6 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS	7 SAHARA
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 SAHARA 11:40, 2:10, 4:40, 7:10, 9:40	2 THE WEDDING DATE 12:50, 2:55, 5:00, 7:05, 9:10		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX SAMARA (RING 2) 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX THE WEDDING DATE 1:30, 3.30, 5.30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 CLOSER 2:40, 4:45, 6:50, 8:55, 11:00 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 FINDING NEVERLAND 1:05, 3:10, 5:15, 7:20, 9:25, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 SAHARA 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX THE WEDDING DATE	2 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS		
	3 SAMARA (RING 2)	4 FINDING NEVERLAND	5 SAHARA	
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Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324

Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729 7777

All-Digital Cinemas

Free Seating Cinemas: P70.00

① Pelukang Itim
② SpongeBob Squarepants
③ Ong Bak
④ Finding Neverland

Guaranteed Seats Cinemas: P90.00

⑤ Sahara
⑥ Samara (Ring 2)
⑦ The Wedding Date

MARKET! MARKET!
The fun is in the finds
Developed and managed by Ayala Land, Inc.

Movies are subject to change without prior notice.
Customer Service Hotline: 886-7515

EVENTS! EVENTS!

SALE! SALE!

TIME TO HARVEST THE BEST DEALS

April 15-16 10am-12midnight
April 17 10am-9pm

Special Events:

April 15
Star Records presents
Michael Cruz & Johann Escañan
6 pm, Activity Center

April 16
Axe: Choose the Girl, Spend Her Money
11am-6pm, Activity Center

April 17 to 20
GO F.I.S.H. Bazaar
11am-9pm, Activity Center

ASHTON Kutcher and Bernie Mac

They called me 'Sidney'

IF HE were your new father-in-law, he could be your worst nightmare. He's Percy Jones, Bernie Mac's character in the remake of the Sidney Poitier classic, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner."

Reversing the original, "Guess Who" has a white man, played by Ashton Kutcher, coming to meet the parents of a black girl.

Why did you want to do this movie?

When I was a little boy, everybody called me Little Sidney. And Sidney Poitier to me was extreme. In one scene [in "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner"], he opens the door for a white woman and they said, "What the heck is wrong with him?" They beat Sidney up, but he was the smartest man at that time.

You were Ashton's personal choice.

He's probably wrong but that's okay.

Who's the better dancer?

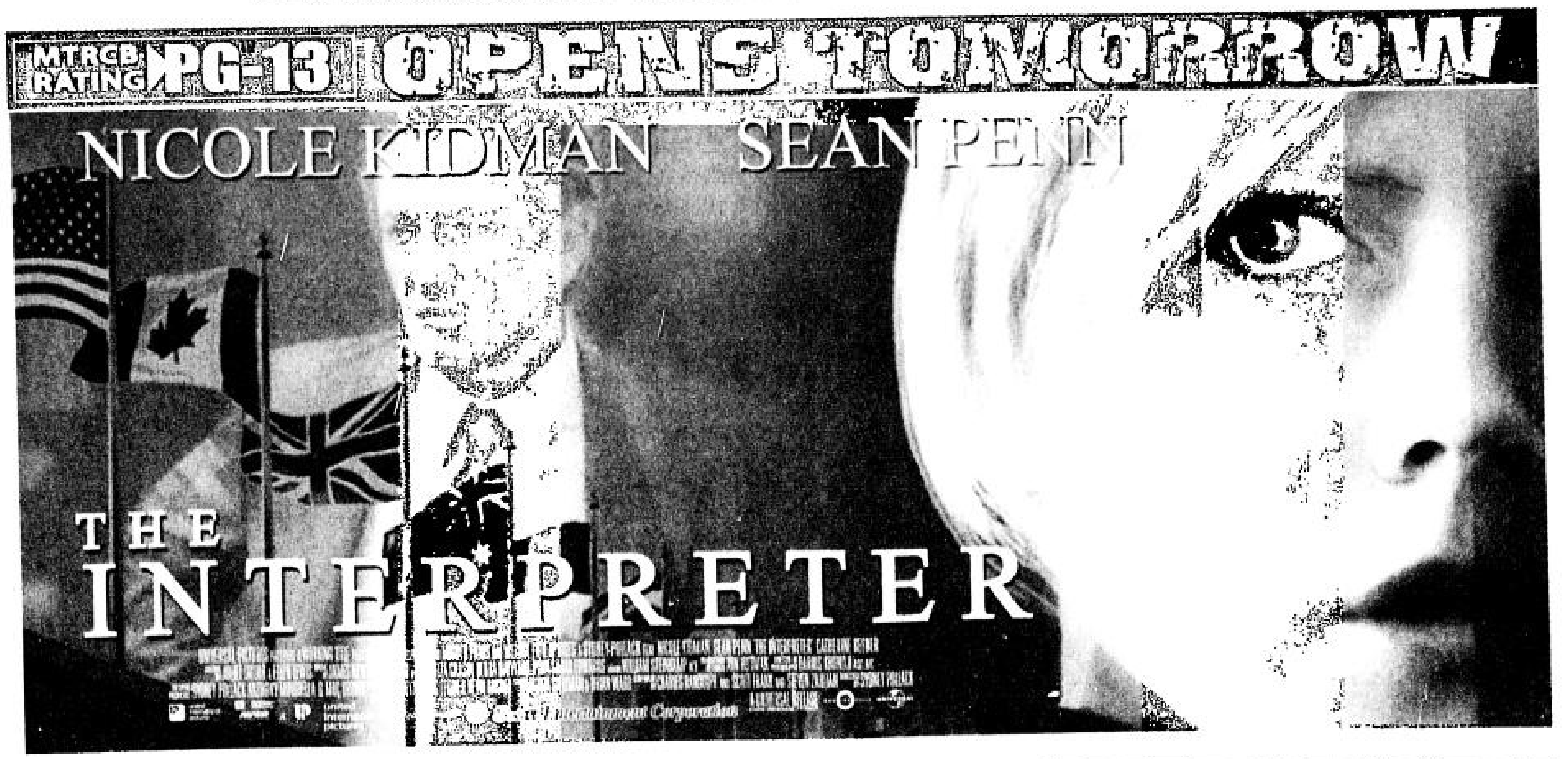
Oh, me.

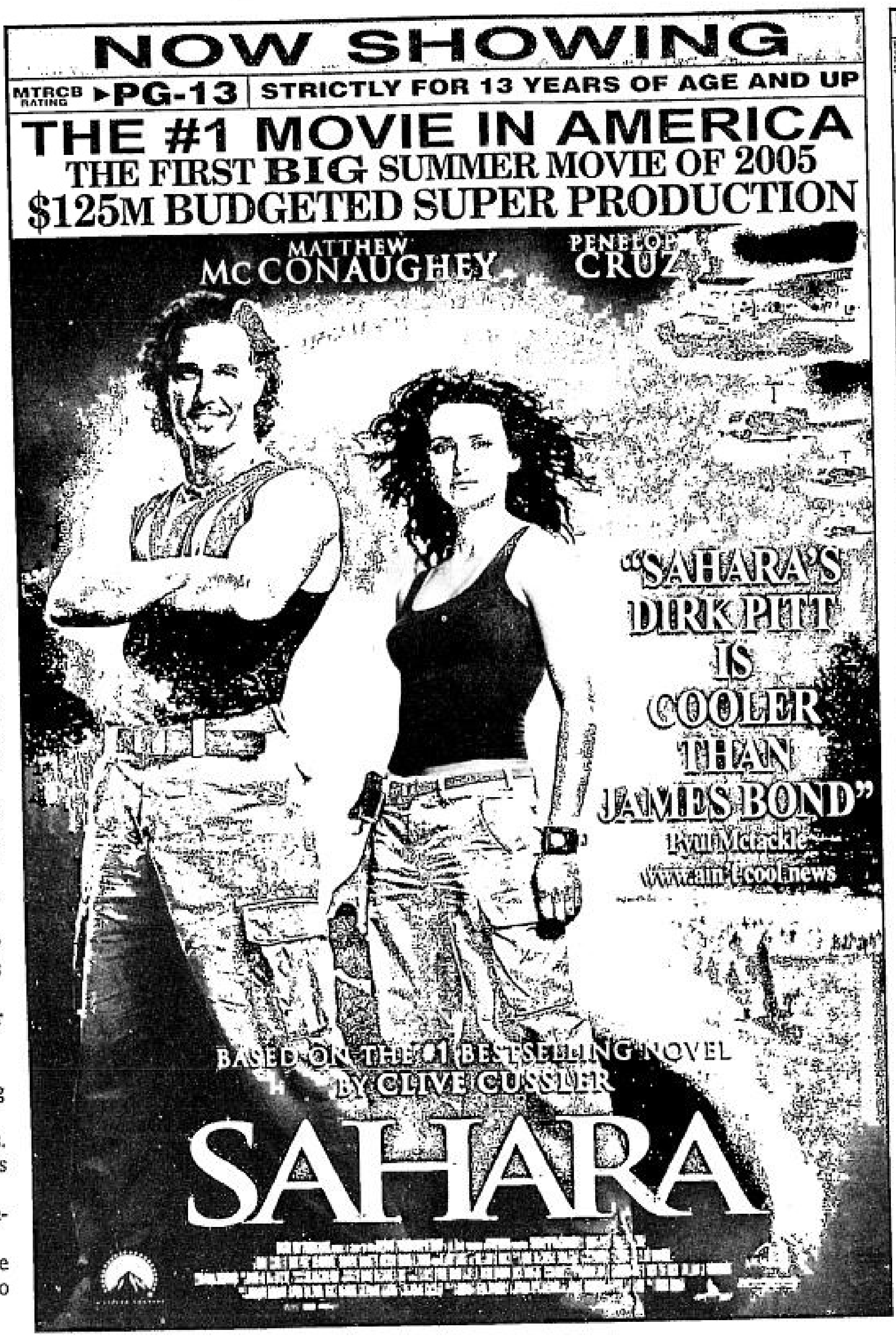
Are things changing with race issues?

I think it's just us. Kids… ain't paying us no attention.

At some point, it becomes an issue.

As long as we have life, we're going to have issues.


MTRCB RATING PG-13
OPENS TOMORROW
NICOLE KIDMAN
SEAN PENN
THE INTERPRETER


NOW SHOWING
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STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND UP
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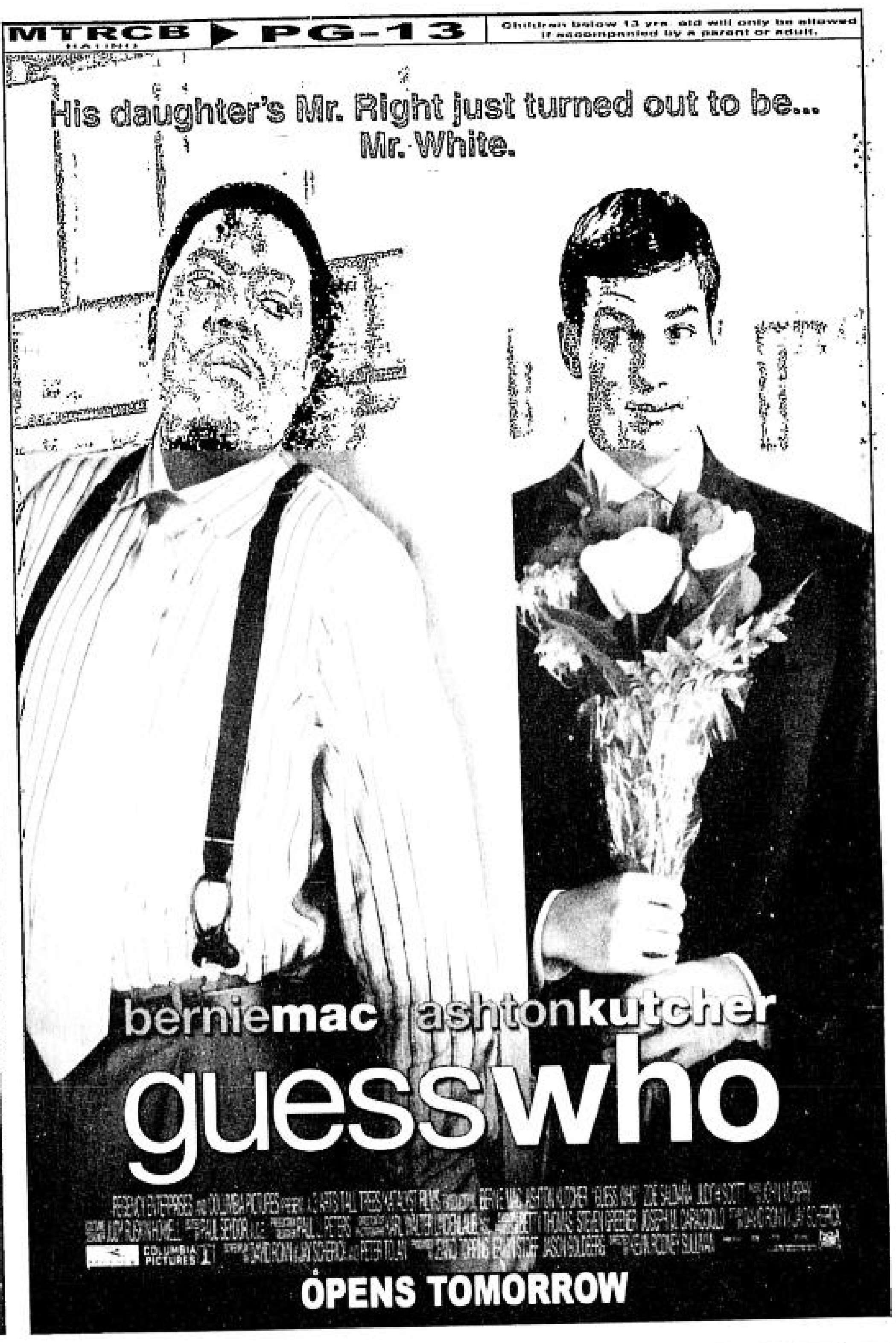
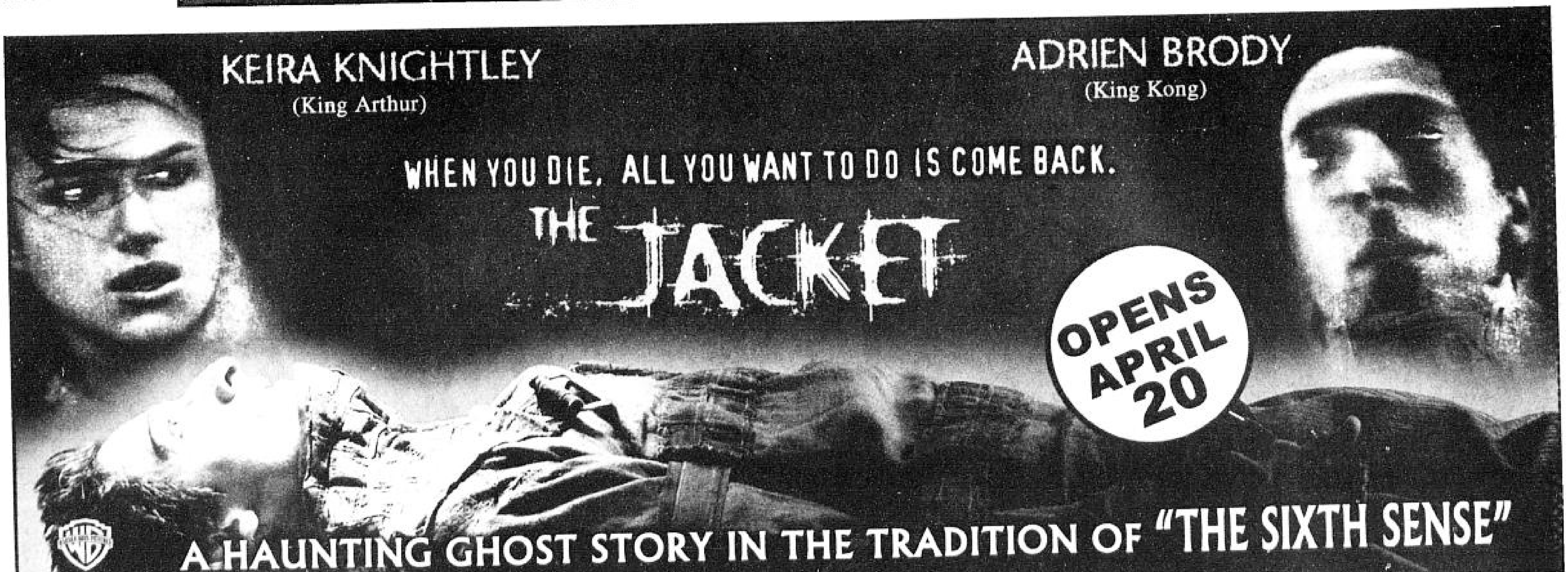
THE FIRST BIG SUMMER MOVIE OF 2005
$125M BUDGETED SUPER PRODUCTION
MATTHEW McCONAUGHEY
PENELOPE CRUZ
"SAHARA'S DIRK PITT IS COOLER THAN JAMES BOND"
BASED ON THE #1 BESTSELLING NOVEL BY CLIVE CUSSLER
SAHARA


MTRCB RATING PG-13
Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult.
His daughter's Mr. Right just turned out to be... Mr. White.
berniemac ashtonkutcher
guess who
OPENS TOMORROW


KEIRA KNIGHTLEY
(King Arthur)
ADRIEN BRODY
(King Kong)
WHEN YOU DIE, ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS COME BACK.
THE JACKET
OPENS APRIL 20
A HAUNTING GHOST STORY IN THE TRADITION OF "THE SIXTH SENSE"

star group of cinemas movie guide
IN DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND

starmall EDSA-SHAW
Tel. No. 726.01.50
3 Gamitan
4 Sahara
5 Ong Bak

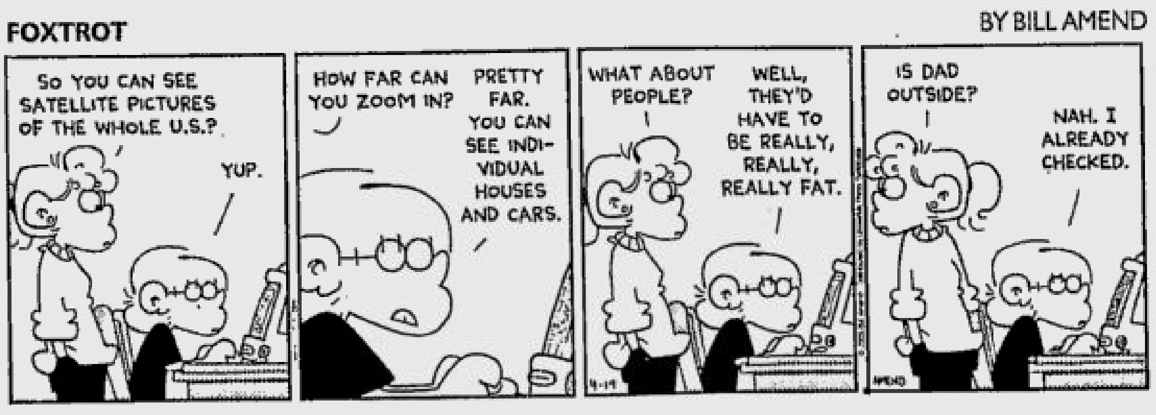
METROPOLIS ALABANG star
Tel. No. 850.42.85
1 Ong Bak
2 Kapitbahay
3 Under Renovation
4 Under Renovation
5 Sahara
6 Hide and Seek

starmall LAS PIÑAS
Tel. No. 873.50.04
1 Legendary Street Fighter
2 Rental Reservation

MTRCB RATING PG-13
Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult.
NOW SHOWING
FEAR COMES FULL CIRCLE
samara ring 2
Solar Entertainment Corporation
DREAMWORKS PICTURES

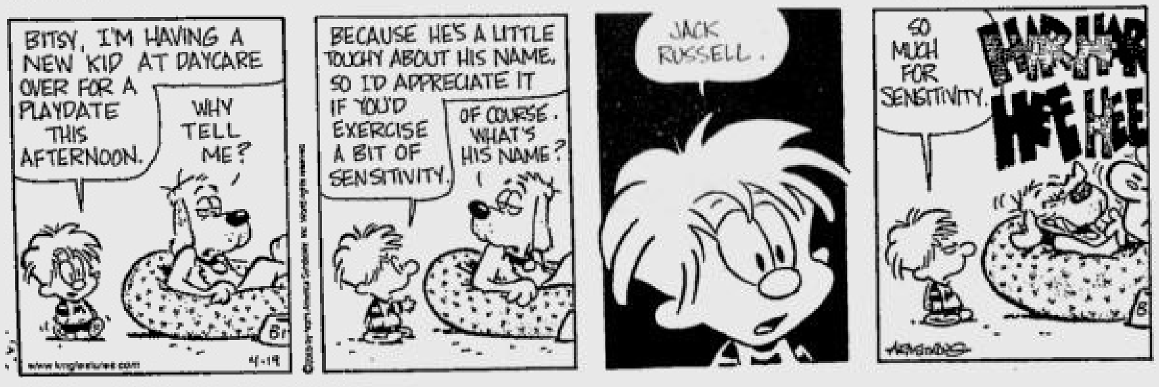
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


SO YOU CAN SEE SATELLITE PICTURES OF THE WHOLE U.S.?
YUP.
HOW FAR CAN YOU ZOOM IN?
PRETTY FAR. YOU CAN SEE INDIVIDUAL HOUSES AND CARS.
WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE?
WELL, THEY'D HAVE TO BE REALLY, REALLY, REALLY FAT.
IS DAD OUTSIDE?
NAH. I ALREADY CHECKED.
4-19
AMEND

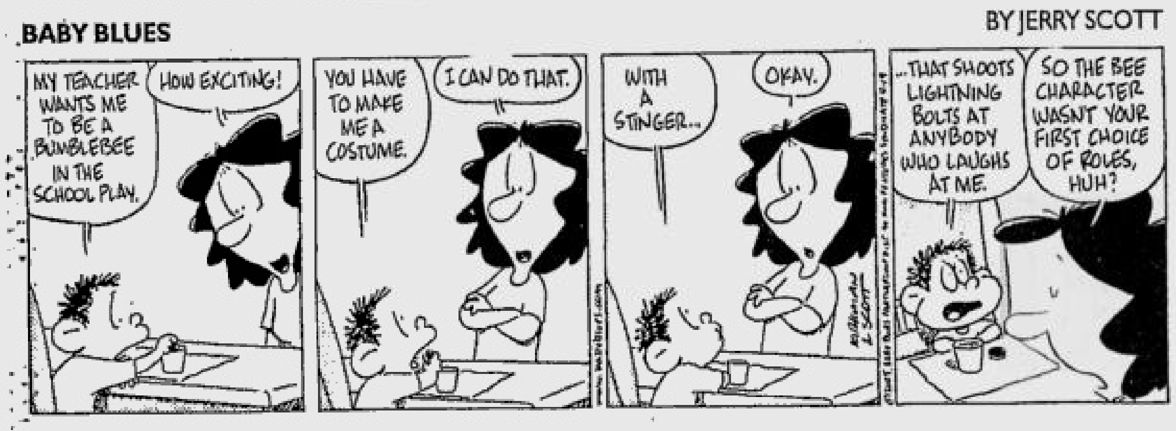
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


BITSY, I'M HAVING A NEW KID AT DAYCARE OVER FOR A PLAYDATE THIS AFTERNOON.
WHY TELL ME?
BECAUSE HE'S A LITTLE TOUCHY ABOUT HIS NAME, SO I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D EXERCISE A BIT OF SENSITIVITY.
OF COURSE. WHAT'S HIS NAME?
JACK RUSSELL.
SO MUCH FOR SENSITIVITY.
HAR HAR HEE HEE
www.kingfeatures.com
4-19
ARMSTRONG

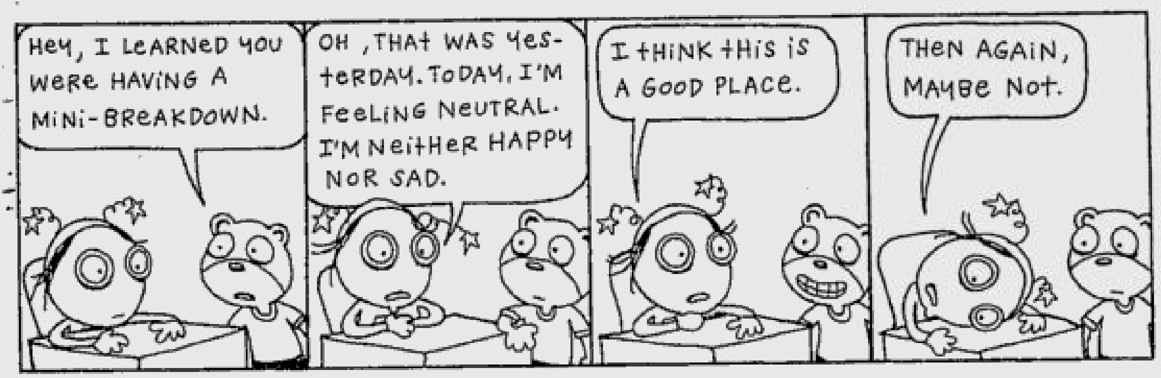
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


MY TEACHER WANTS ME TO BE A BUMBLEBEE IN THE SCHOOL PLAY.
HOW EXCITING!
YOU HAVE TO MAKE ME A COSTUME.
I CAN DO THAT.
WITH A STINGER...
OKAY.
...THAT SHOOTS LIGHTNING BOLTS AT ANYBODY WHO LAUGHS AT ME.
SO THE BEE CHARACTER WASN'T YOUR FIRST CHOICE OF ROLES, HUH?

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey, I learned you were having a mini-breakdown.
Oh, that was yesterday. Today, I'm feeling neutral. I'm neither happy nor sad.
I think this is a good place.
Then again, maybe not.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: At heart, you are a pioneer. You love new experiences. Nevertheless, you want something solid under your feet. You want a career you can count on and a secure family setting. You have strong skills. You're attracted to powerful people. You strive to be in control of your life. Important choices will arise this year. Choose wisely.

Birthdate of: Al Unser Jr., race-car driver; Ashley Judd, actress; Kate Hudson, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): In the next few weeks, your financial scene will be increasingly important to you. You want to know how much money you have and how much you don't.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): It's your turn to shine! In the next four weeks, the Sun will be in your sign, bringing opportunities and people to you. Happy birthday!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): It's important to acknowledge that you need more rest. By nature, you're busy, and you multitask. However, you can't be all things to all people all the time. Relax a little.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Invitations are starting to pour in. People want to see you. In addition, clubs, organizations and associations demand more of your time.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): The Sun is your ruler, and it's now at the top of your chart. This puts you in the limelight. People notice you. Expect an exciting month ahead!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Grab every opportunity that comes your way to expand your education or to learn something new. If you can travel anywhere now and in the next few weeks, do so!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You might be concerned with sorting out shared possessions and the joint ownership of things. You have a lot of stuff to get rid of now.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): A mild flirtation might arise now. You feel a strong attraction to someone. Possibly, someone is attracted to you and you're not aware of it. (Interesting.)

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): In the next few weeks, you can make great headway in terms of getting better organized both at home and at work. You've got the bit in your teeth, and you intend to run with it.

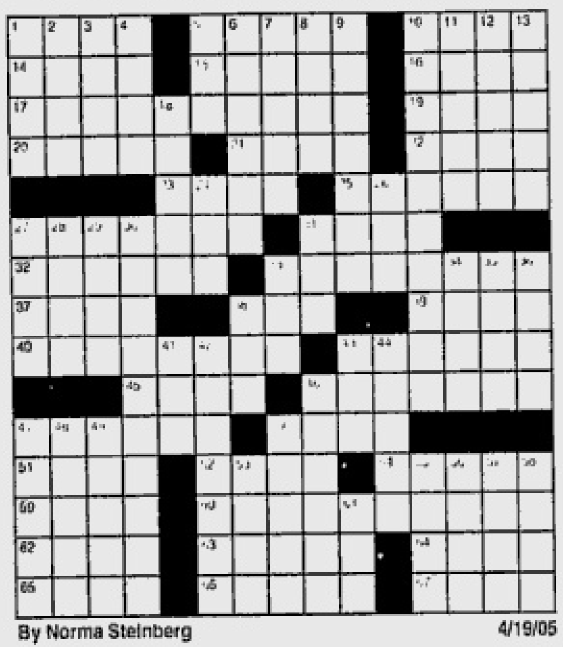
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Everything having to do with romance, love affairs, professional sports, children, the theater, the arts and fun parties is on the menu for the next six weeks! (Lucky you.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): It is most appropriate to focus your attention on home, family and domestic matters now. Do something that makes where you live look more beautiful; buy yourself something special.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): The tempo of your life is starting to accelerate! You've got places to go, people to see, things to do!

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Ms. McEntire
5 Beginning
10 Phony
14 Dinghy devices
15 Nebraska city
16 Tomb-raider Croft
17 Cam-controlled tool
19 Pupil environs
20 Chummy
21 Over in Ulm
22 Hey, you!
23 Pablo's hand
25 Restless desires
27 Flourish of trumpets
31 Big sandwich
32 "__ Eleven"
33 Inspire
37 Spoken
38 Budgetary excess
39 Author Bagnold
40 Poe story, "The __ Heart"
43 Worked for
45 Fizzy drink
46 Perceptual
47 Goddess of wisdom
50 Attenuated
51 Sect of Islam
52 Jack Horner's find
54 Jargon
59 Primitive dwellings
60 Windborne vegetation
62 Ticklish doll
63 Roeper's partner
64 Florence's river
65 Spotted
66 Try to prevent
67 Skyrocket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By Norma Steinberg
San Francisco, CA

4/19/05

DOWN
1 Campus mil. org.
2 Jimmy Carter's middle name
3 Panache
4 Horned vipers
5 Constricting snake
6 Unaffected
7 Stallone role
8 Quaker pronoun
9 Ozzie's wife
10 Davenport wrappers
11 Severe
12 Ascend
13 Marina poles
18 Macho one
24 "__ Poetica"
26 Prefix with dent or corn
27 Part of a yard
28 Land measure
29 Actress Patricia
30 Time for TV line-ups
31 Spicy
33 West of Hollywood
34 __ Domini
35 Stadium level
36 Swirl of water
38 Part of UF
41 Heavy weight
42 Altered to suit
43 Poetic contraction
44 Viewpoint
46 Gloomy in Gloucester
47 Hearth residue
48 Greenland town
49 Blackjack request
50 "Prince of the City" director
53 Service station job?
55 Briefest of epitaphs?
56 Pianist Peter
57 Actress Rowlands
58 Smell
61 PO box item

Monday's Puzzle Solved

B	O	B	S	■	B	E	H	A	V	E	■	A	K	A
S	N	A	P	■	A	L	I	C	I	A	■	S	E	L
A	T	R	A	■	R	E	R	U	N	S	■	P	E	I
■	H	O	W	S	E	V	E	R	Y	T	H	I	N	G
P	E	N	N	E	■	■	■	A	L	S	O	R	A	N
E	M	I	■	C	A	N	I	S	■	■	Y	E	N	S
R	A	E	■	T	E	E	N	■	A	T	I	■	■	■
I	T	S	G	O	O	D	T	O	S	E	E	Y	O	U
■	■	■	E	R	N	■	W	I	T	H	■	E	B	S
S	E	A	N	■	■	P	O	L	A	R	■	A	L	T
A	C	R	E	A	G	E	■	■	■	A	T	R	I	A
W	H	A	T	S	H	A	P	P	E	N	I	N	G	■
R	O	E	■	C	A	N	O	E	S	■	B	I	A	S
E	E	L	■	O	N	U	S	E	S	■	I	N	T	L
D	D	E	■	T	A	T	T	L	E	■	A	G	E	R

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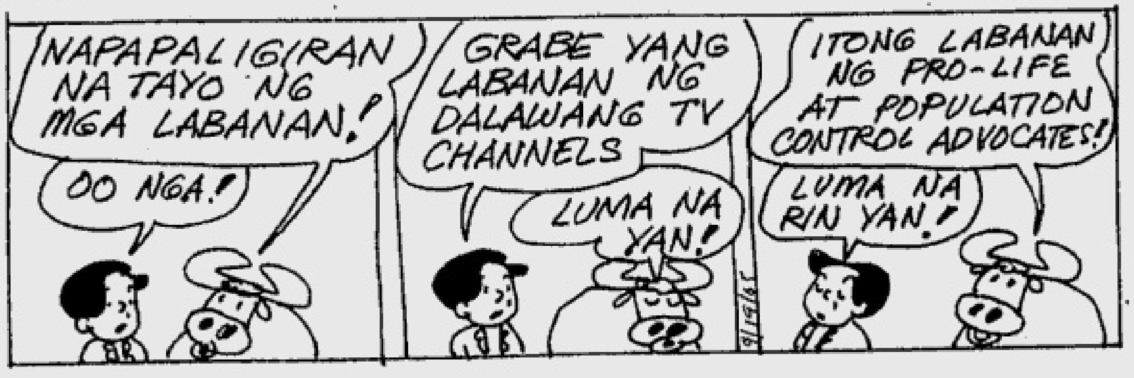
4/18/05

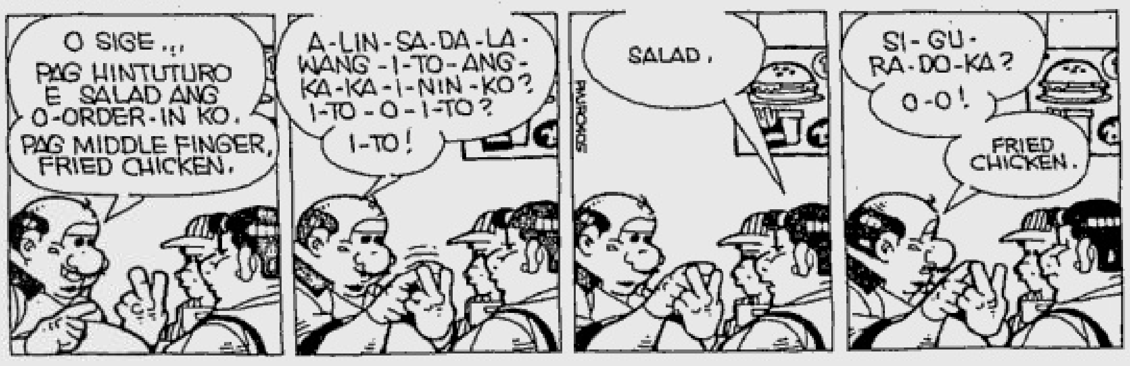
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


NAPAPALIGIRAN NA TAYO NG MGA LABANAN!
OO NGA!
GRABE YANG LABANAN NG DALAWANG TV CHANNELS
LUMA NA YAN!
ITONG LABANAN NG PRO-LIFE AT POPULATION CONTROL ADVOCATES!
LUMA NA RIN YAN!

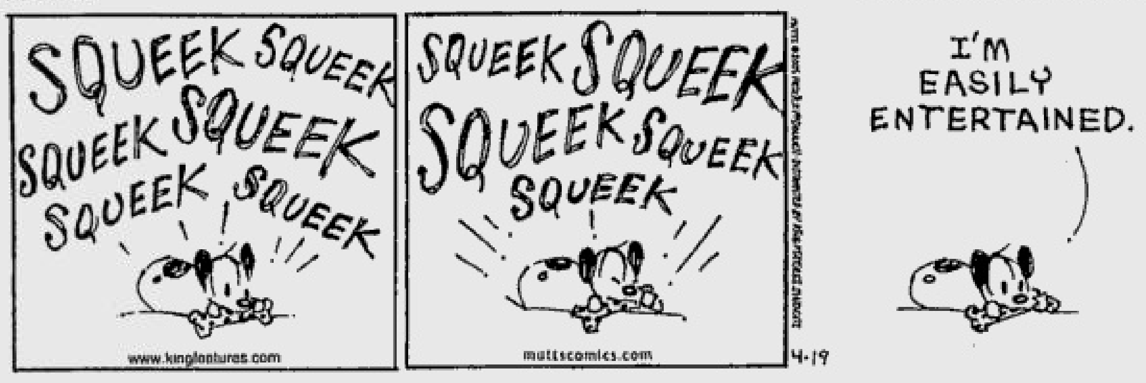
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


O SIGE... PAG HINTUTURO E SALAD ANG O-ORDER-IN KO. PAG MIDDLE FINGER, FRIED CHICKEN.
A-LIN-SA-DA-LA-WANG-I-TO-ANG-KA-KA-I-NIN-KO? I-TO-O-I-TO?
I-TO!
SALAD.
SI-GU-RA-DO-KA?
O-O!
FRIED CHICKEN.

MUTTS

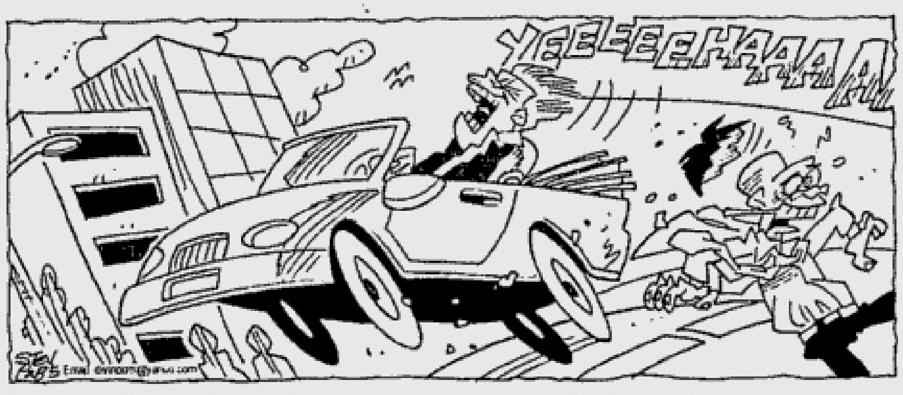
BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SQUEEK SQUEEK SQUEEK SQUEEK SQUEEK SQUEEK
SQUEEK SQUEEK SQUEEK SQUEEK SQUEEK
I'M EASILY ENTERTAINED.
www.kingfeatures.com
muttscomics.com
4-19

DIVINE COMEDY

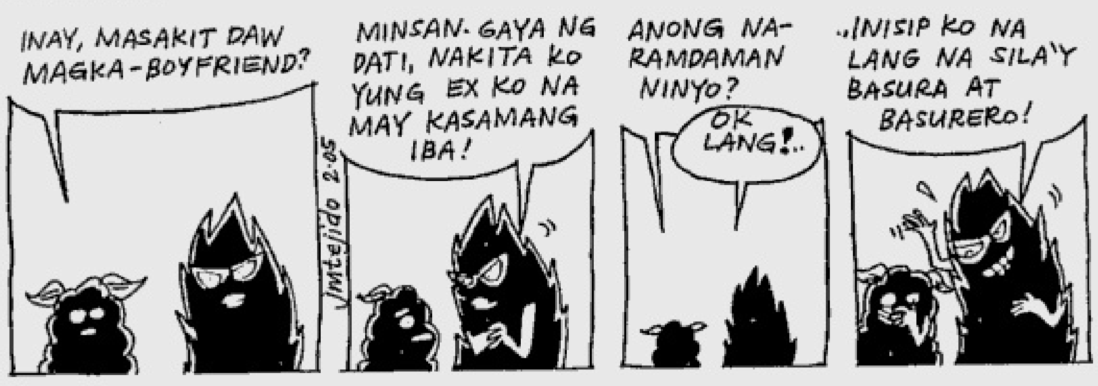
BY STEVEN PABALINAS

MERON NAMANG IBA NA HINDI NILA ALAM PERO NAG-PAPAKAMATAY NA PALA SILA


YEEEEEHAAAA!
STEV PAB5

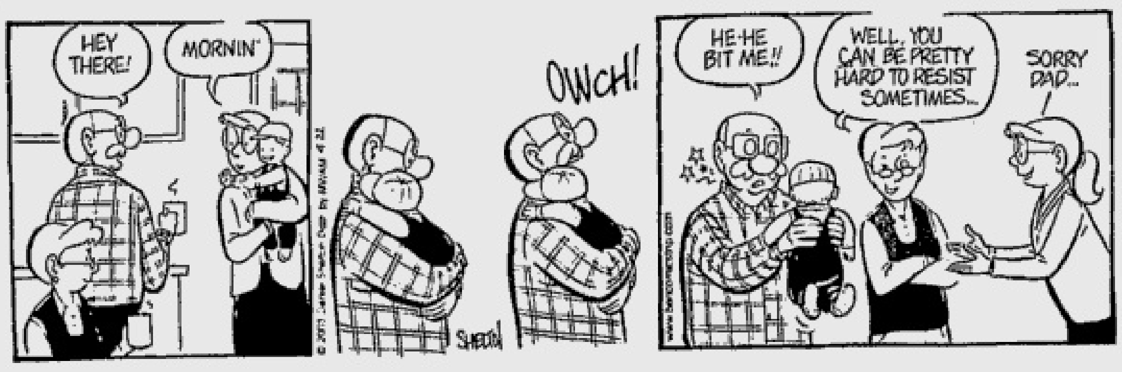
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


INAY, MASAKIT DAW MAGKA-BOYFRIEND?
MINSAN. GAYA NG DATI, NAKITA KO YUNG EX KO NA MAY KASAMANG IBA!
ANONG NARAMDAMAN NINYO?
OK LANG!..
..INISIP KO NA LANG NA SILA'Y BASURA AT BASURERO!
Jmtejido 2.05

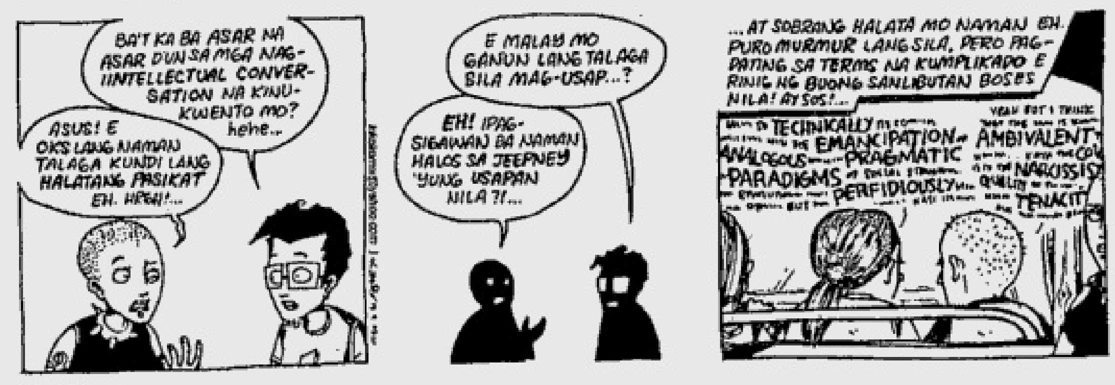
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


HEY THERE!
MORNIN'
OWCH!
HE-HE BIT ME!!
WELL, YOU CAN BE PRETTY HARD TO RESIST SOMETIMES...
SORRY DAD...
SHELTON

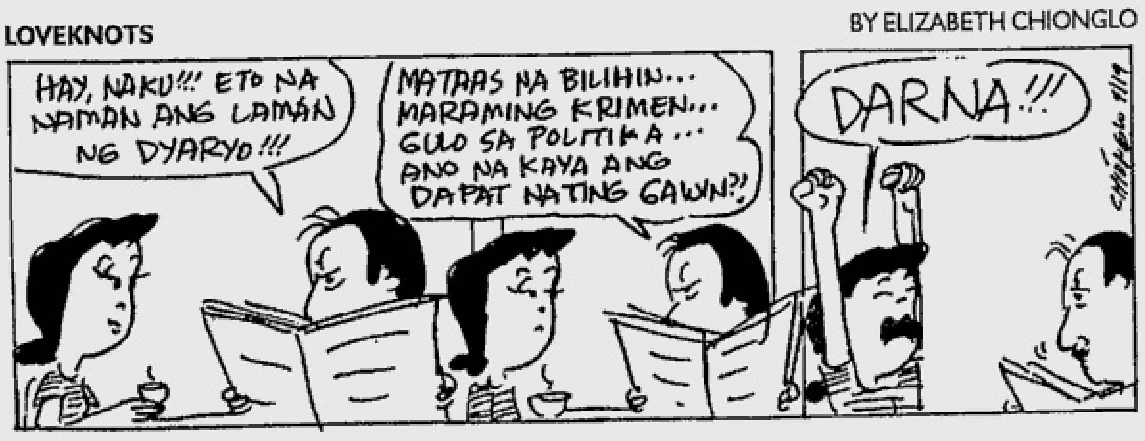
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


BA'T KA BA ASAR NA ASAR DUN SA MGA NAG-IINTELLECTUAL CONVERSATION NA KINUKWENTO MO? hehe..
ASUS! E OKS LANG NAMAN TALAGA KUNDI LANG HALATANG PASIKAT EH. HPGH!...
E MALAY MO GANUN LANG TALAGA SILA MAG-USAP...?
EH! IPAGSIGAWAN BA NAMAN HALOS SA JEEPNEY 'YUNG USAPAN NILA?!...
...AT SOBRANG HALATA MO NAMAN EH. PURO MURMUR LANG SILA, PERO PAG-DATING SA TERMS NA KUMPLIKADO E RINIG NG BUONG SANLIBUTAN BOSES NILA! ATSOS!...
TECHNICALLY
EMANCIPATION
AMBIVALENT
ANALOGOUS
PRAGMATIC
PARADIGMS
NARCISSIST
PERFIDIOUSLY
TENACIT

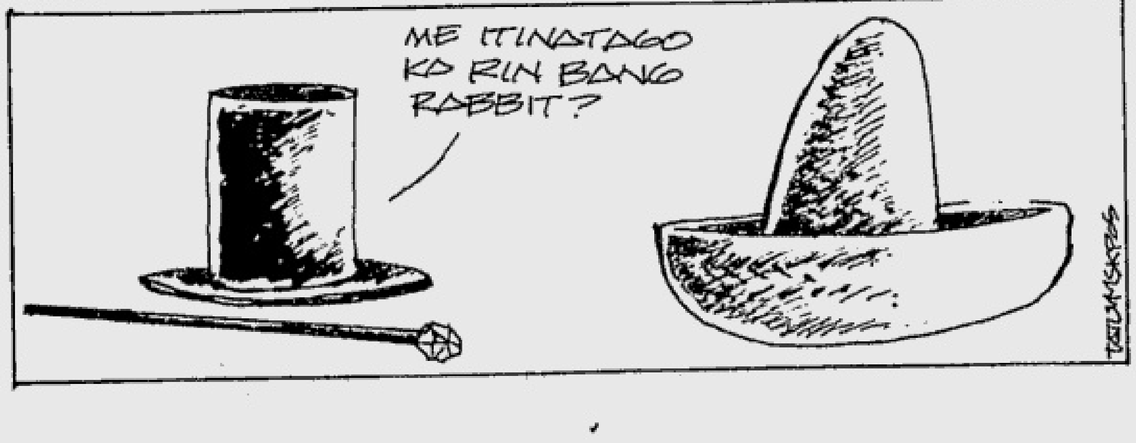
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


HAY, NAKU!!! ETO NA NAMAN ANG LAMAN NG DYARYO!!!
MATAAS NA BILIHIN... MARAMING KRIMEN... GULO SA POLITIKA... ANO NA KAYA ANG DAPAT NATING GAWIN?!
DARNA!!!
CHIONGLO 4/19

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


ME ITINATAGO KA RIN BANG RABBIT?
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TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2005
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1st quarter BOP surplus hits $783M

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES' balance of payments yielded a surplus of $98 million in March, bringing the first-quarter foreign exchange windfall to $783 million, on strong inflows from exports, portfolio investments and workers' remittances.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday reported that the the country's BOP posted a surplus for the second consecutive month, although the March level was much smaller than the three-year high surplus of $962 million recorded in February.

BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said: "The surplus reflected both current and capital account inflows especially OFW (overseas Filipino workers) remittances and portfolio investments. These foreign exchange sources have performed better than expected so far this year."

BSP Assistant Governor Diwa Guinigundo added that the March figure had sustained the large gains in February.

"It captures reasonably strong exports, a surge in OFW remittances and capital flows. More importantly, this was achieved despite high oil imports and continued debt servicing," Guinigundo said.

The strong inflows of portfolio investments since the start of the year, which had led to the sharp appreciation of the peso against the US dollar, also gave the BSP the opportunity to purchase greenbacks from the spot foreign exchange market.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the economy and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account and the capital and financial account.

The current account records trade in goods and services as well as transfers. Any transaction which gives rise to a payment by a Philippine resident like importation is a deficit item while any transaction which gives rise to a receipt like exporting or inward remittance is a surplus item.

But the International Monetary Fund, in a recent country report on the Philippines, said a major source of vulnerability was coming from the large external debt and financing requirements.

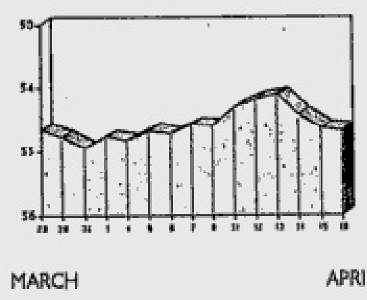
"Vulnerabilities are likely to rise in 2005 even in the absence of adverse shocks due to the less benign external environment of rising global interest rates and tighter liquidity, which could lead to more discrimination by foreign investors and more difficulty in meeting the sizeable public sector

1ST QUARTER/ B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



₱54.66 = $1
As of 5 p.m., April 18, 2005

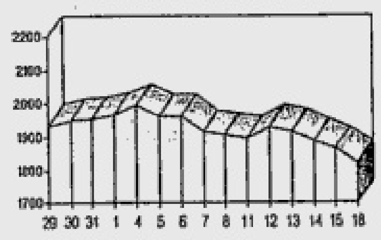
¥107.66 = $1
As of 5 p.m., April 18, 2005

GOLD: $425.40-425.90
per ounce Hong Kong,April 18, 2005

STOCK MARKET

Shares close 2.42% lower

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



SHARE prices closed 2.42 percent lower yesterday, extending losses in line with a sharply weaker region as sentiment was undercut by a proposed rise in corporate tax and concerns that the US economy has hit a soft patch, dealers said.

The Senate wants to raise the corporate income tax by three percentage points to 35 percent in lieu of a two percentage rise in the value-added tax (VAT) to 12 percent proposed by the House of Representatives.

Congress was to start work yesterday on a compromise bill that would be signed into law by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The Philippine stock Exchange composite index lost 45.19 points to 1,818.87 after trading between 1,817.01 and 1,894.06 on volume of 703 million shares worth P1.87 billion. *AFP*

91-day treasury bill rate eases to 6.657%

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BELLWETHER 91-day treasury bill rate slid slightly to 6.657 percent as the high level of liquidity among banks pushed them to scramble for the risk-free government securities.

The new rate, used by banks as a benchmark in pricing their loans, was 2.8 basis points lower than the 6.685 percent recorded the previous week.

The reduction in the rate for the three-month debt instrument yesterday reversed its upward movement in the past weeks, when banks were still awaiting the decision of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas on whether or not to increase its policy rates. Last April 7, the BSP raised its policy rates by 25 basis points, bringing its overnight borrowing rate to 7 percent and the overnight lending rate to 9.25 percent.

Meantime, the 182-day T-bill rate decreased by 14 basis points to 7.85 percent.

"There is so much liquidity in the market that the overnight (borrowing) rate of the BSP is even higher than the rate of the 91-day T-bill," a trader commented. The high level of liquidity among banks could largely be attributed to the sale of their nonperforming loans to special purpose vehicles. Banks were given until April 12 to sell their NPLs if they wanted to avail themselves of the tax incentives granted under the SPV law.

But unlike the 91- and the 182-day rates, the yield for the 364-day T-bills significantly increased to 8.792 percent. The new rate for the one-year government securities was 64.5 basis points higher than the 8.147 percent recorded in its last auction a month ago.

A local trader said the reason for the sharp rise in the one-year rate was not a reflection of the lack of appetite for the government securities, but only a consequence of the decision of the Bureau of Treasury to reject all bids for it in the past three consecutive auctions until last week.

"If (the Treasury) awarded the bids last week, the rate today for the 364-day T-bills could have already gone down because the rates offered last week were even higher," he said.

The 64.5-basis-point increase in the rate of the one-year T-bills was lower than the 74.2-basis-point rate jump that the debt instrument could have seen had the Treasury not reject the bids for the 364-day bills last week.

91-DAY/ B3

GLOBAL QUALITY PROJECT

Passion

INNOVA REVOLUTION TOUR

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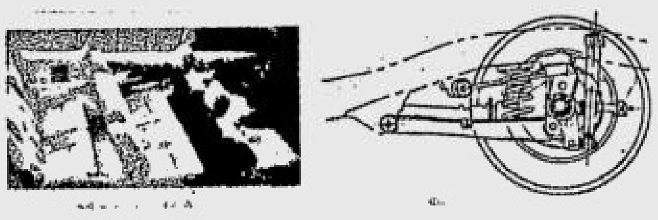
A [R]evolution in Styling

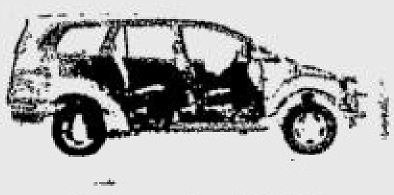
Stylish exterior features; remarkable car-like comfort; a solid frame and enhanced suspension; no-nonsense, all-around safety; and technologically-advanced engines, all with the promise of global quality. With a choice of the latest Common-Rail diesel engine as well as the Variable Valve Timing-intelligent (VVT-i) gasoline engine, both engineered for boosted power, performance and efficiency.

Welcome a beautiful revolution for the Filipino family.

D-4D
VVT-i
A [R]evolution in Power
High-performance 2.5L Common-Rail diesel engine and the 2.0L Variable Valve Timing-intelligent (VVT-i) gasoline engine.



A [R]evolution in Comfort and Luxury
Luxurious interior amenities and cutting edge features like 4-link coil spring rear suspension make for a comfortable and pleasurable ride.



A [R]evolution in Safety
No-nonsense, all-around safety.

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TOUR SCHEDULE:

- ***Apr. 18 - 23, 2005:*** BDR Petron Service Station, MH Del Pilar St., Pob. Norte, Paniqui, Tarlac
- ***Apr. 18 - 24, 2005:*** Nepo Quadrangle, Nepomart Complex, Angeles City
- ***Apr. 21 - 23, 2005:*** Petron-Fairway Service Station, Quezon Blvd. cor Sinsuat St., Kidapawan City
- ***Apr. 21 - 23, 2005:*** Petron Service Station, Rizal St., Legaspi City, Albay
- ***Apr. 22 - 24, 2005:*** La Suerte, Petron Service Center, San Carlos City, Negros Occidental
- ***Apr. 22 - 24, 2005:*** Abatan Amusement Center Abatan, Buguias, Benguet

TOYOTA FINANCIAL SERVICES 858-8500
TOYOTA DEALER NETWORK: TOYOTA ALABANG, INC., Alabang-Zapote Rd cor Concha Cruz Drive 800-0801 to 32 / 807-1091 **TOYOTA BACOLOD CITY**, Gardenville Subdivision, Araneta St., Bacolod City (034) 444-1811 to 13 **TOYOTA BAGUIO CITY**, Bokawkan Road cor Aguila St., Baguio City (074) 447-0851 / (074) 300 3273 to 74 / (074) 300-4128 / 3825 / (074) 443-6778 **TOYOTA BALINTAWAK, INC.**, EDSA cor Vicente Ang & Gen. Evangelista Sts., Kalookan City 366-8901 to 06 / 364-1547 to 50 / 364-4071 to 75 **TOYOTA BALINTAWAK-NORTH**, 1010 Epifanio De Los Santos Ave (EDSA), Quezon City 927-7215 / 17 / 30 / 39 / 927-7242 / 44 / 48 / 52 / 927-7257 / 62 / 65 / 927-7268 / 69 **TOYOTA BATANGAS CITY, INC.** Diversion Road, Barangay Balagtas, Batangas City (043) 723 7386 / (043) 723 7639 **TOYOTA CABANATUAN CITY, INC.**, Km 118 Maharlika Highway, Daang Sarile, Cabanatuan City (044) 463-8481 to 87 **TOYOTA CAGAYAN DE ORO, INC.**, Km 3 National Highway, Kauswagan Cagayan de Oro City (08822) 735-770 / 791 / 846 / (088) 858-9994 / (088) 858-7770 / (08822) 737-480 **TOYOTA CEBU CITY, INC.**, 34 M J Cuenco St., Cebu City (032) 253-1161 **TOYOTA CEBU-MANDAUE** Tabok, Mandaue City (032) 345-8670 **TOYOTA COMMONWEALTH** Commonwealth Ave., Quezon City 952-1021 to 27 **TOYOTA CUBAO, INC.**, 926 Aurora Blvd., Cubao, Quezon City 911-0651 to 63 **TOYOTA DAGUPAN CITY, INC.**, Diversion Road, Barangay San Miguel, Calasiao, Pangasinan (075) 517-2026 to 28 / (075) 522-6771 / 6734 / 4773 **TOYOTA DASMARIÑAS CAVITE** Salitran II, Aguinaldo Highway, Dasmariñas, Cavite (046) 850-2036 / (046) 850-2920 **TOYOTA DAVAO CITY, INC.**, Km. 6 Lanang, Davao City (082) 234-0998 / (082) 234-2994 / (082) 234-8640 **TOYOTA ILOILO CITY, INC.**, Gran Plains Subd., Jaro, Iloilo City (033) 320-6115 to 19 **TOYOTA MAKATI INC.** Ayala cor Metropolitan Avenues, Makati City 897-3333 **TOYOTA MANILA BAY CORP.**, Roxas Boulevard cor. EDSA Extension, Pasay City 832-3408 to 10 / 832-3432 to 34 / 832-3384 / 832-3437 **TOYOTA MARIKINA SERVICE STATION** Brgy. Sto. Niño, Sumulong Highway cor Toyota Ave., Marikina City 682 9701 to 03 **TOYOTA OTIS, INC.**, 1770 Paz M. Guazon St., Paco, Manila 564-1811 to 20 **TOYOTA PASONG TAMO, INC.**, 2292 Pasong Tamo Extension, Makati City 893 8084 **TOYOTA QUEZON AVENUE, INC.**, 728 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City 712-5001 to 06 **TOYOTA SAN FERNANDO**, Olongapo-Gapan Road, San Fernando, Pampanga (045) 961-1188 **TOYOTA SHAW, INC.**, 309 Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong City 532-4132 / 532-8428 / 534-3009 (telefax) **TOYOTA SHAW-ORTIGAS**, 124 E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave., Bo. Ugong, Pasig City 671-0854 to 64 / 671-0460

TOYOTA
FINANCIAL SERVICES
FOR A TOYOTA, GO TO TOYOTA.

VAT men and robbing

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

RECENTLY we got another lavish treat from our beloved lawmakers: a consumer tax on electricity.

That consumer tax is actually the famous VAT, or the value-added tax. Congress wanted to expand the coverage of VAT, so it imposed a 12-percent VAT on electricity.

What kind of magic did our lawmakers apply, so that the consumers could avoid paying the VAT, which is precisely a consumer tax?

Simple, my dear dimple, the Senate and the House of Representatives—our beloved VAT men in Congress—decided that the VAT on power should not be passed on to the customers. Just like that!

In other words, it would still be called a consumer tax, but it would actually be a direct tax on the producers of electricity. What's more, it could become the law.

* * *

NOW, because we needed power plants badly years ago, our government entered into various contracts with so-called independent power producers, or the IPPs.

All those contracts specified that all taxes on power generation would be for the account of the exclusive buyer of the electricity that the IPPs would produce.

That buyer is none other than the state-owned Napocor, which is bleeding more than a hemophiliac lying on a bed of nails decorated with broken glass.

Because Napocor is already gasping for life, the VAT on power will try to end its suffering by bringing about its instant death.

Those contracts, you see, contained a clause about this "change of material circumstances." One example is the government's bright idea to nationalize the entire power sector.

Under their contracts with Napocor, the financiers of the IPPs abroad can simply invoke that particular clause, and all their loans here become due and demandable.

* * *

THAT imposition of VAT on power, the IPPs are now saying, is precisely a "change of material circumstances."

And so, under the loan covenants, the lenders abroad can call on the loans of the IPPs immediately, meaning, the IPPs have to pay up.

To raise the money, IPPs can simply ask the government to also immediately settle its obligations with the IPPs.

And by the way, obligations under government contracts with the IPPs can reach about P2.5 trillion. Peanuts! Again, that's only P2.5 TRILLION.

* * *

SUCH is the mess that this VAT bill from Congress can create given the country's financial standing before the world.

Why did the lawmakers want to impose VAT on power, anyway? Well, it is supposed to enhance our financial standing. Their objective, you see, is to create new taxes to reducing the budget deficit of this cute administration of Gloriaetta.

Thus, the VAT on power is supposed to be the solution. It may yet turn out to be worse than the problem, much like trying to cure your headache by cutting off your head.

And why did Congress want such a consumer tax to be paid, not by the consumers, but by the producers?

It's because they feared that it could kill the consumers, since power rates were already going up. If such was the case, why did they have to impose the tax? Shut up! Stop asking embarrassing questions, okay!

* * *

PRECISELY, the "no pass provision" in the power VAT bill recognized that the tax would be pretty nasty in the eyes of the public.

And so Congress decided that, to avoid public suffering, it could simply make the IPPs take all the punishment. Thus, the "no pass provision!"

But can the IPPs really bear the tax burden all by themselves? We can only find out years from now.

What if, due to the tax, the IPPs go out of business? Well, without enough power, other industries will have to close down, too.

As it is, we already have a power shortage in Mindanao and the Visayas, and soon also in Luzon, either in 2007 or in 2008, depending on who's talking.

If businesses close down, the government can say goodbye to billions of pesos of income tax collection, which can only worsen the finances of this cute administration.

And the power VAT, mind you, is supposed to ease the government's financial woes. What do they call that again—"short-sighted?"

* * *

ON another issue, of course the customers of the pre-need company Pacific Plans are angry. The company just told them it could no longer honor its obligation to them.

Pacific Plans belongs to the Yuchengco group, which includes such famous businesses as RCBC, Malayan Insurance group and the Mapua Institute of Technology.

The company filed a petition in court, seeking for suspension of payments to its 34,000 or so education plan holders, while the company tries to rehabilitate itself.

It is proposing to its customers a "money-back" plan, plus interest earnings that are much better than what they can get from banks, for instance.

Under the plan, Pacific Plans is offering the plan holders a swap, meaning, it gives them "fixed value plans" in exchange of their old "open-ended plans."

There's a world of difference between those two, and so I can understand why the plan holders are mad.

But then again, the company could just give up, and then lie down and die. I thought the swap is a much better alternative.

* * *

ACTUALLY, this whole problem in the pre-need education plan business started some 12 years ago.

That was when the administration of Kuya Eddie thought it would be better for the schools to charge parents a small fortune for tuition.

The government simply took away all regulations covering increase in school fees, including the need for schools to get the consensus of students and parents.

Why did the government do that? Well, it wanted to improve the quality of education in this country. Another victory for "deregulation!"

Now about 12 years later, as expected, the quality of education has yet to improve, and it is probably getting worse, based on government testing of the schools.

* * *

PRIOR to that brilliant move, pre-need companies like Pacific Plans sold the "open-ended" education plan, requiring them to pay for the beneficiary's tuition, no matter where in the stratosphere the tuition would end up.

The "deregulation" forced Pacific Plans to stop selling that kind of plan. That was in 1992. Guess what—the SEC banned the "open-ended" plans only in 2002. Did I hear you say "delayed reaction?"

Anyway, up to today, Pacific Plans still has some 34,000 open-ended plans. It admitted in court that it could not possibly pay for all of them in the future.

BREAKTIME/ B4

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES

1598 M. H. del Pilar Street, Malate, Manila
Tel. Nos. 551-22-00, 522-00-00, 526-01-00

STATEMENT OF CONDITION

(Head Office and Branches)
As of March 28, 2005

ASSETS	
Cash and Cash Items	P 6,321,171,525
Due from Bangko Sentral	10,771,650,450
Due from Other Banks	1,665,480,014
Interbank Loans Receivable	21,958,558,449
Trading Account Securities (Net)	115,168,557
Investment in Bonds and Other Debt Instruments (Net)	93,780,069,048
Loans, Discounts and Advances (Net)	113,664,297,295
Underwriting Accounts (Net)	36,802,500
Equity Investments (Net)	6,249,783,335
Bank Premises, Furniture,Fixtures & Equipment (Net)	5,046,528,003
Other Assets (Net):	
Property Owned/Acquired	14,923,784,256
Others	10,591,142,643
TOTAL ASSETS	P 285,144,436,074
LIABILITIES	
Demand Deposits	P 77,419,636,243
Savings Deposits	110,984,259,649
Time Deposits	29,633,322,477
Special/Other Deposits	1,388,328,913
Due to Bangko Sentral	119,115,442
Due to Banks	68,833,462
Outstanding Checks/Payment Orders	1,550,097,518
Bills Payable:	
BSP-Rediscounting/Special Programs	475,584,035
Interbank Borrowings	-
Deposits Substitutes	237,058,512
Others	27,155,824,196
Unearned Income and Other Deferred Credits	4,435,022,545
Other Liabilities	9,965,244,257
TOTAL LIABILITIES	P 263,432,527,249
CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	
Capital Stock	P 10,871,000,000
Surplus	7,839,039,738
Surplus Reserves	2,952,996,232
Other Capital Accounts	48,872,855
TOTAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	21,711,908,825
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	P 285,144,436,074
CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS	
Unused Commercial Letters of Credit	P 4,545,680,130
Bills for Collection	200,430,151
Spot/Future Exchange Sold	9,821,408,110
Spot/Future Exchange Bought	(855,584,705)
Assets Held Under Trust and Investment Management Agreements	
Invested in:	
- Government Securities	14,591,211,017
- Other Securities, Debt Instruments and Shares of Stocks	18,539,860
- Loans and Discounts	278,896,937
- Other Assets	4,232,165,325
Accountabilities:	
- Trust and Other Fiduciary	11,859,501,946
- Common Trust Funds	2,329,674,025
- Investment/Fund Management	4,931,637,168
Other Contingent Accounts	41,585,027,012
TOTAL CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS	P 74,417,773,837

Other Information

1. Deposits of:	
a. Government	P 143,654,135,749
b. Banks	4,923,060,668
c. Trust Department	608,201,667
2. Compliance with Magna Carta Law:	
a. Prescribed Ratio of Compliance for 6% (Small Enterprises)	20.31%
b. Prescribed Ratio of Compliance for 2% (Medium Enterprises)	4.65%
3. Amount of Non-Performing Loans	23,385,135,594*
4. Ratio of Non-Performing Loans to Total Loan Portfolio	15.18%
5. Amount of Classified Loans and Other Risk Assets	51,671,641,998
6. General Provision for Loan Losses	1,443,692,722
7. Specific Provision for Loan Losses	16,877,351,648
8. Return on Equity (ROE)	10.68%
9. Amount of DOSRI Loans/Advances	4,781,213,654
10. Ratio of DOSRI Loans/Advances to Total Loan Portfolio	3.10%
11. Amount of Past Due DOSRI Loans/Advances	17,996

** Includes Loans Classified as "Loss" which are fully covered by Allowance for Probable Losses amounting to P3,837,740,436.69*

We, ANDRES C. SARMIENTO and ALFONSO B. CRUZ, JR. of the abovementioned bank do solemnly swear that all matters set forth in the above Statement of Condition are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Sgd. ANDRES C SARMIENTO
SVP-Controllership Group

Sgd. ALFONSO B CRUZ, JR.
OIC/SEVP - Institutional Banking and Subsidiaries Sector

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 14th day of April 2005 in the City of Manila, affiants exhibiting to me their Residence Certificate No 06018661, issued in the City of Manila on January 12, 2005 and Residence Certificate No. 06179855 issued in the City of Manila on January 11, 2005.

Doc No. 493
Page No. 99
Book No. XXIII
Series of 2005

FERNANDO T. COLLANTES
Notary Public
Until December 31, 2005
PTR No. 3598806
Issued on January 3, 2005
Manila

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CONDITION

(Bank and Financial Subsidiaries)
As of March 28, 2005

ASSETS	
Cash and Cash Items	P 6,321,825,330
Due from Bangko Sentral	10,771,650,450
Due from Other Banks	1,777,843,100
Interbank Loans Receivable	21,958,558,449
Trading Account Securities (Net)	115,168,557
Investment in Bonds and Other Debt Instruments (Net)	93,803,513,358
Loans, Discounts and Advances (Net)	113,721,565,465
Underwriting Accounts (Net)	36,802,500
Equity Investments (Net)	5,431,028,685
Bank Premises, Furniture,Fixtures & Equipment (Net)	5,237,178,154
Other Assets (Net):	
Property Owned/Acquired	14,964,026,523
Others	11,484,635,843
TOTAL ASSETS	P 285,633,796,414
LIABILITIES	
Demand Deposits	P 77,389,061,428
Savings Deposits	110,958,530,741
Time Deposits	29,633,322,477
Special/Other Deposits	1,388,328,913
Due to Bangko Sentral	119,115,442
Due to Banks	68,833,462
Outstanding Checks/Payment Orders	1,550,097,518
Bills Payable:	
BSP-Rediscounting/Special Programs	475,584,035
Interbank Borrowings	-
Deposits Substitutes	237,058,512
Others	27,155,824,196
Unearned Income and Other Deferred Credits	4,962,009,523
Other Liabilities	9,978,454,519
TOTAL LIABILITIES	P 263,916,310,766
CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	
Capital Stock	P 10,871,000,000
Surplus	7,844,517,815
Surplus Reserves	2,953,094,978
Other Capital Accounts	48,872,855
TOTAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	21,717,485,648
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	P 285,633,796,414
CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS	
Unused Commercial Letters of Credit	P 4,545,680,130
Bills for Collection	200,430,151
Spot/Future Exchange Sold	9,821,408,110
Spot/Future Exchange Bought	(855,584,705)
Assets Held Under Trust and Investment Management Agreements	
Invested in:	
- Government Securities	14,591,211,017
- Other Securities, Debt Instruments and Shares of Stocks	18,539,860
- Loans and Discounts	278,896,937
- Other Assets	4,232,165,325
Accountabilities:	
- Trust and Other Fiduciary	11,859,501,946
- Common Trust Funds	2,329,674,025
- Investment/Fund Management	4,931,637,168
Other Contingent Accounts	41,585,027,012
TOTAL CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS	P 74,417,773,837

Other Information

1. Deposits of:	
a. Government	P 143,654,135,749
b. Banks	4,923,060,668
c. Trust Department	608,201,667

2. List of Bank's Financial Subsidiaries
   - a. LBP Leasing Corporation
   - b. LBP Financial Services, SPA
   - c. LBP Remittance Co., USA

We, ANDRES C. SARMIENTO and ALFONSO B. CRUZ, JR. of the abovementioned bank do solemnly swear that all matters set forth in the above Consolidated Statement of Condition are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Sgd. ANDRES C. SARMIENTO
SVP-Controllership Group

Sgd. ALFONSO B. CRUZ, JR.
OIC/SEVP - Institutional Banking and Subsidiaries Sector

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 14th day of April 2005 in the City of Manila, affiants exhibiting to me their Residence Certificate No. 06018661, issued in the City of Manila on January 12, 2005 and Residence Certificate No. 06179855 issued in the City of Manila on January 11, 2005.

Doc. No. 492
Page No. 99
Book No. XXIII
Series of 2005

FERNANDO T. COLLANTES
Notary Public
Until December 31, 2005
PTR No. 3598806
Issued on January 3, 2005
Manila

Member: Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (Deposits insured up to P250,000.00)

DISCLOSURES

EEI Corp. elected Roberto Jose L. Castillo as director, replacing Marcelo Dy, who resigned upon adjournment of the April 15 meeting.

* * *

FILINVEST Land Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 27, 9 a.m. at the FCC Marketing Office, Corporate Avenue, Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang, Muntinlupa City. Record date is April 29.

* * *

MANILA Mining Corp. disclosed that the elected directors of the company for the year are: Felipe U. Yap, Charles L. Bradish, Rene F. Chanyungco, Ethelwoldo Fernandez, Augusto C. Villaluna, Patrick K. Yap and Brian U. Yap. The independent directors are Eduardo B. Bangayan and Patricio L. Lim.

* * *

PANCAKE House Inc. will hold the annual meeting of stockholders on June 30, 10 a.m. at the Lapanday Center, 2263 Pasong Tamo Ext., Makati. The record date is May 31.

* * *

UNION Bank of the Phils. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 27, 2 p.m. at the Rigodon Ballroom of the Peninsula Manila, cor. Ayala and Makati Avenues, Makati. Record date is April 8.

* * *

KEPPEL Philippines Marine Inc. disclosed that Celso A. Vivas has been elected as independent director and has been appointed as member of the nomination committee, compensation and renumeration committee, and chairman and member of the audit committee by the board of directors. ***Compiled by Erika Sarmiento, PDI Research***

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of April 18, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.65	17,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	26	26	25	25.5	412,900
Bank of the Phil. Islands	48.5	48.5	47	47	5,166,500
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.67	0.67	3,470,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	46.5	47	46.5	47	6,200
International Exch. Bank	18	18	18	18	83,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	32	32	29.5	29.5	858,100
Philippine National Bank	30	30	29	29	24,600
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	2,500
Security Bank Corp.	28	28	27.5	27.5	167,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	28	28	27	28	23,300
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Filipino Fund Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2400	2400	2400	2400	20
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.06	281,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	150	150	150	150	850
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1620	1630	1620	1625	220
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	14.75	14.75	14	14.5	24,700
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.08	1.08	1	1.02	6,676,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	840	840	810	810	9,200
Ipeople Inc.	4.25	4.25	4	4	15,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	1,000,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.05	3.15	2,671,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	35,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1360	1360	1335	1335	331,650
Ivantage Corp.	0.68	0.68	0.67	0.67	1,450,000
Philweb Corp.	0.02	0.02	0.017	0.018	62,800,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	16.75	16.75	16.5	16.5	40,500
Manila Electric Co. B	24.25	24.25	23	23	351,100
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.3	6.3	6	6	30,505,000
Petron Corp.	3.35	3.4	3.3	3.35	1,126,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	20,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.2	1.2	1.16	1.16	423,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	7.1	7.1	6.8	6.8	214,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.51	0.51	630,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.65	0.66	1,590,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	20,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	3.25	3.25	3.1	3.1	2,060,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.35	3.4	3.35	3.4	55,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28	28	28	28	372,800
RFM Corp.	0.89	0.89	0.87	0.87	360,000
San Miguel Corp. A	57.5	58	57	58	342,400
San Miguel Corp. B	81.5	82	81.5	82	276,800
Universal Robina Corp.	12	12	12	12	2,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	500,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.009	0.009	0.008	0.0085	156,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.0095	0.0095	0.009	0.009	14,000,000
Ayala Corp.	6.6	6.6	6.3	6.4	5,558,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	70,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.4	150,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.038	0.038	0.038	0.038	1,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.92	1.92	1.9	1.9	1,198,000
APC Group Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.33	700,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	4,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	20,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	10,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.175	0.175	1,100,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1	1	0.97	0.98	18,379,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	500,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.24	2,500,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.35	0.35	0.3	0.32	400,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	2.9	2.9	2.75	2.75	2,126,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	9.1	9.1	8.8	8.8	2,436,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	46	46	44	45	842,600
Global Equities Inc.	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	1,000,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	100,000
Ionics Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.42	1.42	59,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.15	3.15	3	3	670,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	100,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.34	1.34	1.3	1.3	2,681,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.41	0.42	0.41	0.41	12,380,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.91	160,000
SM Investments Corp.	248	248	243	244	1,915,020
South China Resources Inc.	0.64	0.64	0.6	0.6	560,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.23	0.235	0.22	0.22	11,260,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.26	1,260,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	3,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	20,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.115	0.115	0.11	0.11	3,730,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.24	1.24	1.18	1.2	5,615,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.98	0.98	0.94	0.94	2,100,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	20,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.3	0.31	7,750,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	26,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	200
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	3,200
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	10,300
PLDT 10% Pref Series Cc	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	2,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7.6	7.8	7.4	7.8	15,726,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.91	0.91	0.71	0.91	30,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	560,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.24	0.25	0.24	0.24	1,450,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.42	0.42	670,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.38	1.4	1.38	1.38	2,430,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	200,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.18	2.18	2.18	2.18	100,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57	90,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	50,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	10,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	300,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	4.55	4.6	4.55	4.6	599,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	70,000
SM Development Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	25,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.2	7.2	7.1	7.1	7,443,000
MINING					
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	4.95	4.95	4.8	4.85	345,000
Benguet Corp. B	23.5	23.5	23.5	23.5	4,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	2,950,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.32	8,950,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.015	0.016	0.015	0.016	61,800,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.022	0.022	0.02	0.021	85,400,000
Omico Corp.	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.0075	82,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.94	0.94	0.92	0.92	4,660,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.18	1.18	1.06	1.08	3,124,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	34.5	36.5	34.5	35.5	529,400
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	70,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	20,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	8,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	200,000
Pacifica	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	5,200,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.44	2.44	2.4	2.4	56,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	2,240,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.36	0.36	0.34	0.34	850,000

CURRENCIES

April 18, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.773874013	1.000000	54.6200
Japan	Yen	0.007182	0.009280	0.5069
United Kingdom	Pound	1.46417	1.892000	103.3410
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.099236	0.128233	7.0041
Switzerland	Franc	0.645433	0.834028	45.5546
Canada	Dollar	0.620888	0.802311	43.8222
Singapore	Dollar	0.467315	0.603865	32.9831
Australia	Dollar	0.596343	0.770594	42.0898
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.05277	2.652590	144.8845
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.206355	0.266652	14.5645
Brunei	Dollar	0.465909	0.602047	32.8838
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000081	0.000105	0.0057
Thailand	Baht	0.019543	0.025253	1.3793
UAE	Dirham	0.21071	0.272279	14.8719
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.292200	70.5800
Argentina	Peso	0.267545	0.345722	18.8833
Brazil	Real	0.299139	0.386548	21.1133
Denmark	Kroner	0.134169	0.173373	9.4696
India	Rupee	0.017709	0.022883	1.2499
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.203678	0.263193	14.3756
Mexico	New Peso	0.069675	0.090034	4.9177
New Zealand	Dollar	0.55447	0.716486	39.1345
Norway	Kroner	0.121497	0.156998	8.5752
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013039	0.016849	0.9203
South Africa	Rand	0.123674	0.159811	8.7289
Korea	Won	0.000762	0.000985	0.0538
Sweden	Kroner	0.109035	0.140895	7.6957
Syria	Pound	0.014908	0.019264	1.0522
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024521	0.031686	1.7307
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000361	0.000466	0.0255

1st quarter BOP . . .

From page B1

external commercial borrowing needs," the IMF said.

The Fund said the high level of external debt made the domestic economy extremely vulnerable to a sharp rise in global interest rates, estimating that an increase in US Federal Reserve's key policy rates by 100 basis points would add about $300 million to interest payments this year.

"External financing difficulties could also be triggered by the markets losing patience with the speed at which the Philippines is implementing reform," the IMF said.

Meanwhile, the IMF also estimated that every $10 a barrel increase in oil prices would slash 0.75 percentage point from the country's gross domestic product growth and a deterioration in the current account balance of about 1.25 percent of GDP.

The government has expressed concern about skyrocketing global oil prices, finally admitting that growth targets had to be cut.

RP downgraded to negative

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

MY SUMMONS to Rome turned out to be a cardinal error but I was already on my way. I saw the bishops walking in a straight line past the Sistine Chapel and I was surprised. I thought that bishops only moved diagonally. The expectation is that the next Pope might be black but we will soon know. If we see white smoke, then it will be a white Pope; if black smoke, then it will be a black Pope, hopefully not Eddie Murphy. President Arroyo rang one if the Filipino cardinals and asked him to use his influence with the Senate to pass the VAT bill. "Madame President," he said," I will do VAT I CAN." They are now pontificating.

A couple married for 10 years did not have a child because the husband caught mumps as a teenager and was infertile. They did not want to go to a sperm bank because they preferred to know the proxy father so the wife rang Surrogate Father's Inc. and asked for a suitable man to come over. The husband left for work feeling dejected.

Purely by chance, a door-to-door baby photographer rang the bell. "Good morning, madam. You don't know me but I have come to..." "No need to explain. I've been expecting you." "Good. I make a specialty of babies." "That's what I hoped. Where do we start?" "Leave it to me. We'll try one in the bathtub, one on the couch and one on the living room floor. I can't guarantee a good one every time but if we try several positions, you should be pleased with the results."

"I hope this will not take long," said the horrified wife. "Madam, in my line of work, a man must take his time. I would like to be in and out in five minutes but you wouldn't be disappointed for sure." He then pulled out his portfolio of baby pictures. "This was done on top of a bus in the middle of New York." "Oh, my God," said the wife in a state of shock.

"These twins turned out exceptionally well considering the mother was so difficult to work with. "She was difficult?" asked the wife. " Yes, I had to take her to Central Park and people were crowding around four or five deep." "Four or five deep?" asked the bewildered woman. "Yes and for three hours, too. The mother was squealing and yelling and I could hardly concentrate. Then it got dark and I had to rush my shots. Well, Madam, if you're ready, I will just go to the car and get my tripod."

"Your tripod?" asked the befuddled wife." Oh, yes. I have to use a tripod to rest my Canon on. It's much too big for me to hold while I'm getting ready for action. Good Lord, she's fainted."

* * *

JUST about every bad thing is happening at the moment. Wall Street fell nearly 200 points after making more than 400 points in three days. Japan Credit Rating has just downgraded us from BBB-stable to BBB-negative and a transport strike was ongoing yesterday. The Senate and House versions are still far apart and time is running out. Imports have fallen and the BIR has missed its tax target 2 months in succession. Foreign investors are still net sellers.

No wonder the stock market is so depressed, the public is panicking and cutting their losses as can be seen by the increased turnover. In a falling marker, volume should contract not expand, so investors are throwing their stock overboard. Are they right to do so? Only time will tell.

But the risk indicator is down to zero, a rare event, and I am nibbling at blue chips. I haven't gone crazy. I am following my indicator, which up to now, has never been wrong. Of course, there is always a first time and maybe next week, I will have egg on my face. But at least, I am not afraid to say what I think and act accordingly.

I am hoping that in the interest of national survival, the House and Senate will listen to the President's plea and award her an acceptable version of the VAT bill, which will go a long way to reducing the deficit. This latest and unexpected downgrade might be the shock needed to bring the politicians to their senses.

The government is getting fed up raising billions of dollars for the GOCO's, particularly Napocor. On its own recognizance, Napocor could not raise P10 so I would not be surprised if they give them the big increase they are demanding and then pass it on to the consumer. Once the company becomes viable, it can be sold off and some of the money can be recovered though the sale of its assets. A tough decision but I think the government has to bite the bullet.

The next problem is the jeepney strike. Bearing in mind the numerous

RP/ B4

91-day treasury bill rate . . .

From page B1

The way banks threw their bids yesterday reflected their high level of liquidity. Tenders for the 91-day bills reached P8.52 billion, while bids for the 182-day paper stood at P5.24 billion. For the 364-day securities, tenders reached P3.86 billion. The government only accepted P2 billion from each of the T-bill tenors, raising in full its P6 billion intended borrowings for this week.

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9. Winners will be notified through registered mail.
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13. To claim prizes – present claim stub, valid ID and registered notice.

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8877280 · 8877295 · 8877296
8880698

Rm. 301 Pacific Bldg.
460 Quintin Paredes
corner Gandara Sts.,
Binondo, Manila
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Cebu City
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KOREA TRADE CENTER, MANILA is pleased to announce the upcoming events in Korea:

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Venue : GYEONGJU HYUNDAI HOTEL, Korea
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"KOREA PACK 2005"
Date : May 17 to 20, 2005
Venue : KINTEX, Goyang, Korea
Exhibit Items: Food Packaging & Processing Machineries, Pharmaceutical/Cosmetic Packaging, Machinery & Materials for Packaging Processing and Production Lines of all Industries, Logistics and etc.

****

" HEATING, AIR CONDITIONING, REFRIGERATION AND FLUID EXHIBITION-KOREA (HARFKO 2005)"
Date : MAY 25 TO 27, 2005
Venue : KINTEX, Goyang, Korea
Exhibit Items: Heating Equipment, Airconditioning Equipment and Refrigeration for industrial, commercial and residential, Fluid items and etc.

****

'FIRE & SAFETY EXPO KOREA 2005"
Date : MAY 26~29,2005
Venue : EXCO, Daegu, Korea
Exhibit Items: FirePreventionEqpt,FireExtinguishers,Rescue, EMS, Structure,LifeLine,TrafficDamage from Storms&Floods, Earthquake,SecurityGadgets,Police/Guard Supplies and etc.

****

"SMART HOME SHOW 2005"
Date : JUNE 2~5, 2005
Venue : KINTEX, Korea
Exhibit Items: Alarm Reporting,Audio,Broadband,Computer,Hardware, & Software,Digital Multimedia Broadcasting System,Digital TV,Digital Imaging/Video Editing,ElectronicGaming,HomeAppliances,HomeTheater, Robot,MobileOffice,Mobile/VehiclesElectronics,On-LineCommercial Products,NetworkSolutions,SatelliteSystem,Security/AccessControl,. PhotographicEqpt,Sensor/WiFi,WirelessCommunication,etc.

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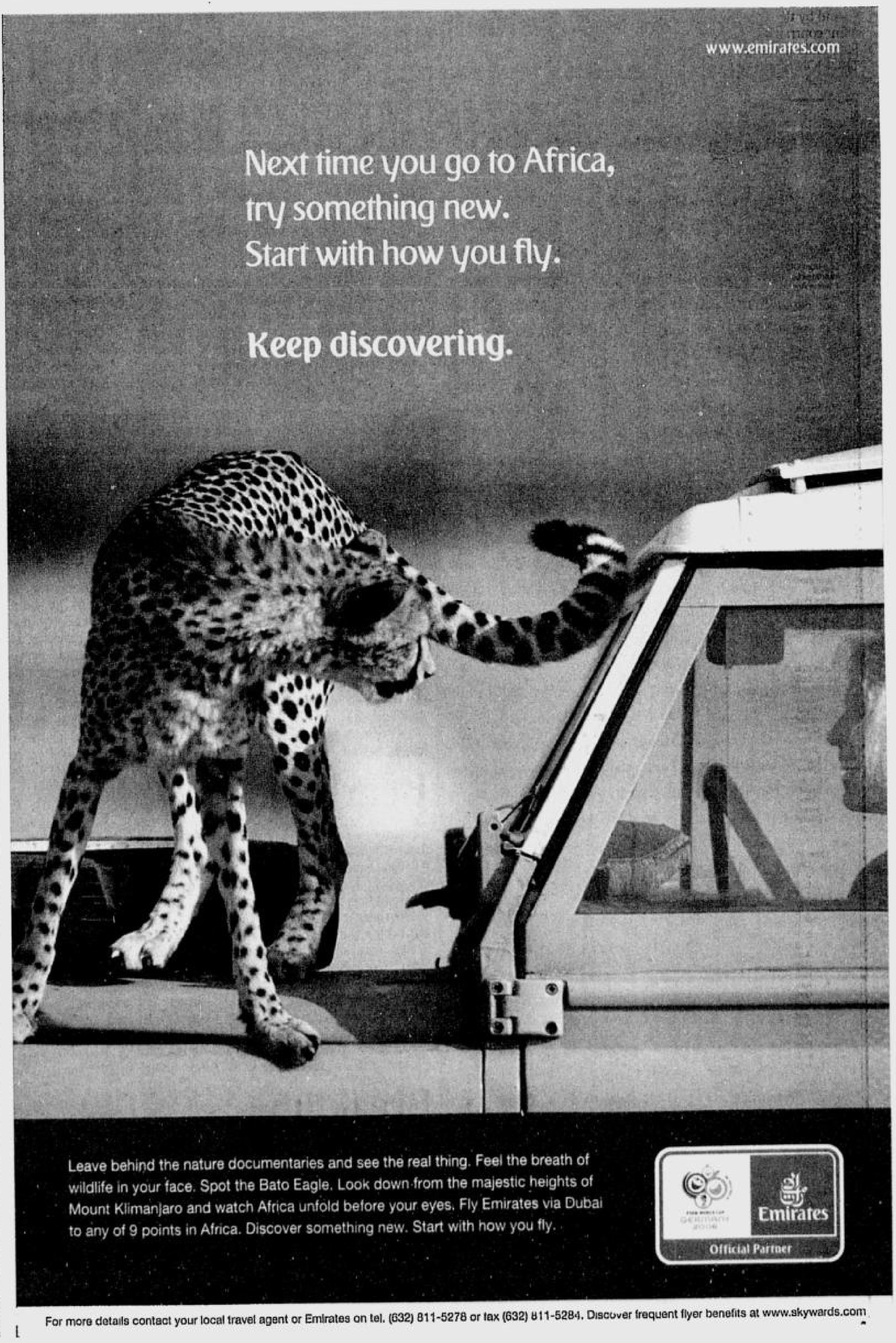
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Medium-term investment plan to cost ₱2.13T

By Michelle V. Remo

THE ARROYO administration has laid down the new Medium-Term Philippine Investment Plan (MTPIP), which requires P2.13 trillion in funding for the various programs and projects that are needed to achieve the country's economic and social development goals until 2010.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) yesterday said the MTPIP would focus on five areas—economic growth and job creation, energy, social justice and basic needs, education and youth opportunity, and anti-corruption and good governance.

Jonathan Uy, director of the Neda public investment unit, said that of the amount required, the national government would shoulder P908 billion. Government-owned and -controlled corporations, and government financial institutions will contribute P661.6 billion, while local government units and investments from the private sector will account for P478.6 billion. The remaining P81.8 billion will come from grants from international donors.

But the Neda official said the amount earmarked by the national government could even go higher if the value-added tax bill, which is already being deliberated in the bicameral conference committee of Congress, would be passed. He said the expected additional revenue from the VAT measure, at least P60 billion yearly, and other measures that have yet to be passed have not yet been accounted for in the MTPIP. Only the P15 billion in additional annual revenue from the sin tax law, which was passed in December, was factored in the formulation of the MTPIP, he said.

Economic officials earlier agreed that 30 percent of the additional revenue from yet-to-be-passed tax measures would go to productive government spending. About 70 percent will be used to reduce the government's burgeoning debt, he said.

The official said the implementation of the programs and projects under the plan could be hastened if Congress would approve the bill.

"Without the additional revenue (from the VAT bill), the projects will continue. The health of the economy is stable, but it can do much better with more revenues," he said.

To achieve the MTPIP's objective of economic growth and job creation, several projects and programs scheduled to be undertaken in the next fiver years include rationalization of the government agencies, completion of the Nautical Highway and the Subic-Clark Development projects, Sulong Kabuhayan Program, and the One-Town-One-Product program, among others.

In the area of energy development, the projects include the Barangay Electrification program, the 90-MW Southern Leyte Geothermal project, the Electricity Market and Transmission Development Project, the Mindanao Coal-Fired Power Plant, the Mindanao Power Transmission Project, and the Substation Modernization Program.

In the area of social justice and basic needs, the projects and programs include Agrarian Justice Delivery program, Land Tenure Improvement program, Expanded Program on Immunization, Presyong Tama Gamot Pampamilya program, Kalahi-CIDSS:KKB, and the Mindanao Basic Urban Sector Services project.

For the development of the country's youths, the programs and projects include the Regular-School Building program, Institutionalization of Early Childhood Educations, Strong Republic Schools-Distance Learning System, Conservation of Existing Traditions, Indigenous Knowledge, and Cultural Masterpieces, and the Philippine Cultural Education Plan projects.

To fulfill the goal of curbing corruption and promoting good governance, projects and programs include the strengthening of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission, BIR (Bureau of Internal Revenue) Personnel Integrity program and Internal Audit program, BOC (Bureau of Customs) Personnel Integrity program, Administrative Rationalization, and Overseas Welfare program.

Of the P908-billion share of the national government in the investment expenses up to 2010 stated in the MTPIP, P575.1 billion will be for programs centered on the area of economic growth and job creation; P3.5 billion for energy development; P191 billion for social justice and basic needs; P125.9 billion for youth development; and P13 billion for anti-corruption and good governance.

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Deferment of Malampaya stake sale backed

PHILIPPINE National Oil Co. said it was supporting the decision of the Cabinet-level Privatization Council to suspend the sale of portion of the stake of its subsidiary PNOC Exploration Corp. in the Malampaya natural gas project.

PNOC president Eduardo Mañalac said he believed the council "wants all issues addressed first before the privatization is finalized."

"As good soldiers, PNOC will follow the council's instructions," he said.

Mañalac said the council wanted "maximum prudence since there appears to be many and varied interests affected by the prospective sale of the asset."

Finance Undersecretary Gabriel Singson Jr. earlier said the council "has noted that there are valid issues being raised by some quarters regarding the prospective sale of the PNOC EC stake." The council revoked its order in March, which allowed PNOC to proceed with the sale of the stake to the South Korean consortium led by LG International.

Singson said the revocation of the instructions to PNOC brought back the privatization process "to where it was before March 22." PNOC EC was earlier set to finalize the sale to the LG group pending the exercise by its current partners Shell Philippines Exploration Corp. and Chevron-Texaco Malampaya Llc (CTMLL) of their preemptive right. They later opted to match the LG offer.

Singson clarified that since the prospective sale to the LG group was shelved, "there is technically no offer to match."

PNOC-EC earlier put up 49 percent of its 10-percent interest in the Malampaya project on the auction bloc in line with a national government condition tied up to a sovereign guarantee in 1999 for a $175-million Citibank credit facility.

Mañalac earlier indicated that the government was not willing to let go of the stake "at fire sale price." He said the prospective sale price "must be reasonably profitable for PNOC EC."

SPI'S P3-B EXPANSION PLAN

SPI Technologies Inc. president and CEO Ernest Cu, chair Ramanan Raghavendran and Derk Haank, CEO of Springer Science + Business Media, announce the P3-billion expansion plan of SPI in the country during a press briefing in the company's Parañaque office. SPI is one of the world's leading business process outsourcing services provider. It started operations in the country in 1980. ROGER MARGALLO

Acer shoots for top 3-slot in the world PC market

Nationwide summer mall tour launched to further heat up race for market leadership

(April 19, 2005, Manila) Acer, one of the world's leading computer brands, embarks on a bolder, more aggressive marketing campaign this year with the intention of eventually taking over the no. 3 spot in the world PC market. Acer is currently the number 1 notebook vendor in Europe, with a total of 498,956 notebooks shipped in the 2nd quarter of last year alone and plans to sell more desktops in order to become the world's no.3 PC maker.

Acer also aims to expand its reach beyond its key markets in Southeast Asia, Australia, and Europe by boosting sales in China and rekindling interest for the brand in North America.

In the Philippines, Acer will soon be undertaking a nationwide mall tour to showcase the most number of desktop PCs desktop PCs, data projectors, LCD monitors and servers from Acer available in the market today. These products feature a wide range of advanced capabilities and offer ease-of-use, expandability and reliability at budget-friendly prices.

Dubbed "All Roads Lead to Acer", this year's nationwide summer mall tour gives Filipinos a chance to witness a wide assortment of products from Acer. Ms. Angel Aquino will lead the ceremonial ribbon cutting along with top Acer officials headed by its president Mr. Manuel Wong to kick-off the festivity on April 15, 2005 at the Festival Mall Alabang from 10am to 9pm.

Those who will attend the kick-off roadshow at the Festival Mall in Alabang can also win lots of prizes. Everyone is invited to join Angel Aquino, acoustic band "Paradigm" and other surprise guests as they regale the crowd with exciting games and activities during the event.

Catch the rest of the "All Roads Lead to Acer" mall tour events on the following locations and schedules:

LOCATION	DATE
• SM Iloilo	April 22, 23, 24, 2005
• SM Cebu	April 29, 30, May 1, 2005
• SM Cagayan de Oro	May 6, 7, 8, 2005
• SM Davao	May 13, 14, 15, 2005
• SM Baguio	May 20, 21, 22, 2005
• SM Pampanga	May 27, 28, 29, 2005
• Market! Market!	June 3, 4, 5, 2005
• SM Megamall	June 10, 11, 12, 2005
• Podium *(grand raffle draw)*	June 30, 2005

According to Mr. Manuel Wong, President of Acer Philippines, Inc., the event is one of the company's ways of promoting the brand not only in terms of its notebook-variants, but also through a wide array of products and superior technology, having been in the global PC market for over 2 decades.

For more details about the mall tour as well as Acer's latest products and service offerings, call 815 3388 or visit www.acer.com.ph.

(advertorial)

Digitel earnings up 13.3%

By Clarissa S. Batino

DIGITAL Telecommunications Philippines Inc. registered a 13.3-percent increase in its operating revenue last year to P7.33 billion from year-ago's P6.47 billion.

In a disclosure, Digitel said that of the total 2004 revenue, P576.1 million came from Digitel Mobile Philippines Inc., which operates Sun Cellular.

In 2003, the wireless business delivered only P300.4 million or almost 5 percent of the revenue.

Digitel has yet to submit a full report on its 2004 finances.

As of the third quarter 2004, its net loss swelled to P1.08 billion from P722.8 million in the same period of 2003 due to financing costs incurred by the wireless business.

Digitel is spending $200 million this year to expand its network that would allow it to improve Sun Cellular's coverage as well as capacity.

The move will increase the company's cellular sites to about 2,000 by the end of the year from about 1,300. It will also allow the company to accommodate as much as 6.million subscribers, up from the current capacity of about 2 million.

Sun Cellular is expected to break even on earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization when its subscriber base hits 2.5 million.

Digitel said that from 1.5 million in January, Sun Cellular added another 200,000 subscribers in February. This was mainly attributed to the 24/7 plan, which offers subscribers unlimited calls and text within the network for P350 a month or P100 for seven days.

Before 24/7 was launched in October, Sun Cellular had only 700,000 customers. The subscriber base more than doubled in five months.

Sun Cellular expanded its 24/7 menu by adding unlimited within-network text for P50 for seven days and P150 for one month.

Piltel proposing 'network challenge'

MOBILE phone operator Pilipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel) is asking the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) to immediately subject Piltel, Innove Communications Inc. and Digital Mobile Philippines (Digitel) to a performance test by an independent and international party.

"We are issuing a network challenge to the NTC," said Piltel head for legal and carrier business group Rogelio V. Quevedo.

The tests will not only reveal which company is providing substandard service, but also which one is offering the best service, he added.

"We will all agree on the choice of the international and independent party that will do the testing. Both Piltel and Globe are willing to split the cost of the tests," he said.

Piltel and Globe's Innove Communications earlier filed a complaint with the NTC against Digitel, operator of Sun Cellular, for alleged violations of NTC Memo Circular 07-06-2002 on the service performance standards for cellular mobile telephone services (CMTS), which requires all mobile operators to maintain a grade of service (GOS) of 7 percent and a drop call rate (DCR) of 5 percent.

Based on actual tests, Piltel said Digitel was experiencing a call setup success rate (CSSR) of as low as 38 percent or only 38 successful calls out of 100 calls on the first attempt. Mobile phone operators are required to have at least 93 percent successful calls on the first attempt.

Bearbull

From page B3

increases in the price of diesel, I think it fair to give them another P1. One small union is already clamoring for a P100 a day increase as I predicted last week.

Obviously, that is unrealistic but I think there should be a P30 a day increase in the minimum wage. This is just enough to cover inflation since the last increase 15 months ago. The last thing we need right now is a general strike and an Edsa 4.

Overseas, there has been a sharp fall in profits of tech companies and manufacturers of electronics. Last Friday, IBM, Sony, Samsung, Philips, Infosys, and Hewlett Packard all reported results far worse than expected. So markets globally are falling, led by Wall Street. From Jan 2004 to Jan 2005, profits in the U.S. rose by 20 percent. Last week, the increase has been reduced to 8.3 percent and these figures are going to be revised downwards.

Although GDP growth in America is expected to be 3.6 percent, in Japan and Germany, it is down to 0.8 percent. Apart from the U.K., which has a GDP growth of 3.5 percent and a general election in less than three weeks, the rest of Europe is in a bad way. It is only China that is holding up demand for commodities and if they succeed in showing down this year, countries like Australia are going to suffer. As for our export market, the main buyers of our products are the US, Japan, China and Europe. With two markets stagnant and the other two slowing, the outlook is not good.

If China and India can overcome their cultural differences and form a trading block of 2.3 billion people (40 percent of the world's population) the long-term effects could be staggering. China is the manufacturing hub of everything and now that they have IBM, they could produce computers in enormous quantities. India can supply the software, so between them, they could take over the information highway. *mrbearbull@hotmail.com*

Breaktime

From page B2

That's why it offered the swap in the rehab plan, in which it would give "fixed value" plans in exchange for the "open-ended" plans.

But how fixed is the "fixed value?" From what I gathered, it is the cost of the open-ended plan, plus 9 percent yearly interest. No other bank can give such a rate, mind you!

The fixed plans are also payable in 2010. By that time, the amount will have doubled. The alternative is, well, the plan holders get nothing.

* * *

IN the 1980s, a similar crisis hit the financial markets, due also to the watchful eyes of the SEC, which allowed the indiscriminate issuance of corporate IOUs.

At that time, even Aling Maring's Carinderia could issue "commercial papers" which were sold to the public.

To calm down the market, the then Central Bank tried to bail out the investment houses and the conglomerates affected by the crisis of confidence—on one condition.

And that was, the owners of those business must take a hit. Well, a BIG hit, actually!

That, in fairness, is what the Yuchengco group is doing. It is taking a hit in order to save Pacific Plans.

Under the rehab plan, Pacific Plans will issue P300 million worth of preferred shares. The proceeds will help fund the rehabilitation program.

I gathered that, actually, the Yuchengco group is putting up that P300 million. I just thought that was something. Others would have just dropped the company after, well, robbing it!

Top finance meetings end with growth warning

WASHINGTON—A weekend of high-powered finance meetings wound down here Sunday with an ominous warning from the head of the IMF on chances of a market shock and no deal on debt relief.

Senior finance officials from around the world, representing the Group of Seven industrialized states and the policy-making body of the IMF, also made clear their worries about the impact of high oil prices and appealed again for currency market stability.

International Monetary Fund managing director Rodrigo Rato, speaking late Saturday, dampened optimism evident in an earlier G7 statement with a warning that markets could suffer "an abrupt correction" unless major powers took steps to even out the pace of growth.

He said the global financial system was now out of kilter because of the huge US current account deficit, weak growth in Europe and Japan, the low savings rate of US consumers and inflexible currency regimes in Asia.

"If policies do not adapt, do not change to react to these imbalances, we run the risk of an abrupt correction of the markets ... (when) confidence for different reasons could evaporate or could be reduced," he told reporters.

But both Rato and the G7—Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States—forecast continued healthy global growth this year, albeit threatened by rising energy costs.

The Group of Seven and IMF policymakers were also in agreement on the need to promote energy efficiency and diversity, with the Fund calling specifically for "removing barriers to the development of alternative fuels."

"We believe there should be a closer dialogue that brings together exporters and importers," said British finance minister Gordon Brown, chairman of the IMF's international monetary and financial committee.

"We believe that the level of information about available resources and transparency in relation to that ought to be far greater so that the world and markets are in a better position to know what the true position is."

Despite any sign of concrete headway, G7 ministers nonetheless claimed progress toward their goal of erasing an $80-billion multilateral debt burden that sees more money go on interest repayments than on health or education in the developing world.

"It's now recognized, I think for the first time from these meetings, that more money has to be made available," Brown said.

"What we must now do is get the international agreement on sums of money and we believe that that will come at Gleneagles," he said in reference to a Group of Eight—the G7 plus Russia—summit in Scotland in July.

The G7 ministers made no mention of a Brown-inspired proposal under which the IMF would sell a portion of its massive gold reserves to cancel the debt owed it by poor countries. *AFP*

Erratum:

In the last print ad of PAMI last April 18, 2005, the heading Minimum Yield should have Minimum Placement Instead. Our apologies for whatever confusion this has caused.

Asian stocks slump

SINGAPORE—Asian share markets dropped to four-month lows on Monday, with Tokyo shares alone losing around $120 billion of market value, as poor tech earnings and the widening Japan-China rift sparked a broad-based selloff.

"There's simply no good news. In the US, the economy seems to be slowing down. In the region, China and Japan are embroiled in a dispute. And in the tech sector, investors are pushing back their expectations for a recovery to some time in the second half," said Park Kum-yung, a fund manager at Mirae Asset Co. in Seoul.

Japan's Nikkei hit a four-month low, closing down 3.8 percent at 10,938.44 and wiping out 12.8 trillion yen ($118.9 billion) of investor value in its steepest one-day decline in nearly a year. *Reuters*

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Ayala Centra, Makati City

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@ Prince of Wales Pub and Restaurant
Basement, New Plaza Building
Greenbelt Centre
Ayala Centre, Makati Centre

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NOOSA COAST & COUNTRY PROPERTIES

DBP Development Bank of the Philippines

STATEMENT OF CONDITION
(Head Office and Branches)
As of March 28, 2005
(Nearest Peso)

ASSETS		Amount
Cash and Cash Items		P 746,295,547
Due from Bangko Sentral		2,462,206,264
Due from Other Banks		4,523,511,851
Interbank Loans Receivable		6,763,672,970
Trading Account Securities (Net)		50,744,483,215
Investment in Bonds and Other Debt Instruments (Net)		15,995,049,375
Loans, Discounts and Advances (Net)		72,136,383,872
Underwriting Accounts (Net)		2,357,950,000
Equity Investments (Net)		317,674,507
Due from Head Office/Branches/Agencies Abroad		448,015,190
Bank Premises, Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (Net)		918,257,199
Other Assets (Net):		
Property Owned/Acquired		4,823,771,944
Others		8,001,229,211
TOTAL ASSETS		P 170,238,501,145
LIABILITIES		
Demand Deposits		P 14,536,632,331
Savings Deposits		19,133,248,036
Time Deposits		10,329,383,278
Special/Other Deposits		69,770,095
Due to Bangko Sentral		78,000,023
Due to Banks		43,197,489
Due to Head Office/Branches/Agencies Abroad		0
Outstanding Checks/Payment Orders		576,211,119
Bills Payable:		
BSP-Rediscounts/Special Programs		0
BSP-Other Advances		0
Interbank Borrowings		94,291,141,770
Deposit Substitutes		0
Others		3,935,595,824
Unearned Income and Other Deferred Credits		933,014,082
Other Liabilities		5,451,933,692
Unsecured Subordinated Debt (Inclusive of Unamortized Premium/Discount)		0
TOTAL LIABILITIES		P 149,378,127,739
CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		
Capital Stock		P 12,500,000,000
Assigned Capital		0
Surplus		7,542,109,001
Surplus Reserves		243,887,754
Other Capital Accounts		574,376,651
TOTAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		20,860,373,406
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL ACCOUNTS		P 170,238,501,145
CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS		
Unused Commercial Letters of Credit		P 2,744,443,213
Bills for Collection		34,702,526
Spot/Future Exchange Bought		6,723,937,660
Spot/Future Exchange Sold		6,723,937,660
Assets Held Under Trust and Investment Management Agreements		14,985,821,847
Invested in:		
Government Securities	P 11,092,641,915	
Other Securities, Debt Instruments and Shares of Stock	457,805,764	
Loans and Discounts	852,854,930	
Other Assets	2,582,519,238	
Accountabilities:		
Trust and Other Fiduciary	6,252,877,787	
Common Trust Funds	303,900,783	
Investments/Fund Management	8,429,043,277	
Unearned Income and Other Accountabilities	0	
Other Contingent Accounts		39,735,176,841*
TOTAL CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS		P 70,948,019,747

Other Information **

1. Deposits of:		
a. Government		P 29,871,511,061
b. Banks		1,016,974,319
c. Trust Department		1,667,602,658
2. Compliance with Magna Carta Law:		
Prescribed Ratio of Compliance	6% for Small Enterprises	2% for Medium Enterprises
Actual Compliance	14.27%	17.69%
3. Amount of non-performing loans		P 9,179,731,725
4. Ratio of non-performing loans to total loan portfolio		9.59%
5. Amount of classified loans and other risk assets		P 9,355,988,450
6. General provision for loan losses		P 3,263,441,637
7. Specific provision for loan losses		P 4,805,914,643
8. Return on equity (ROE)		12.21%
9. Amount of DOSRI loans/advances		P 4,915,304,101***
10. Ratio of DOSRI loans/advances to total loan portfolio		5.50%
11. Amount of past due DOSRI loans/advances		P 10,800
12. Ratio of past due DOSRI loans/advances to total loan portfolio		0.00%

* P 38.55 B are "funded liabilities". Under AO No. 14 dated February 3, 1987, DBP remains as guarantor, but the National Government is committed to fund maturities in case of inability of the debtors to pay.

** Amended to conform with BSP Circular No. 208 dated August 17,1999 and Memorandum to All Banks dated Novemnber 29, 1999.

*** Includes loans to various GOCCs totaling P3.70 B.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
MAKATI CITY) S.S.

We, EDGARDO F. GARCIA and REYNALDO G. DAVID of the above-mentioned bank do solemnly swear that all matters set forth in the above statement of condition are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Sgd.
EDGARDO F. GARCIA
Senior Executive Vice President and
Chief Operating Officer

Sgd.
REYNALDO G. DAVID
President and Chief Executive Officer

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 15th day of April, 2005, at City of Makati, affiants exhibiting to me their Community Tax Certificate No. 10081942 issued at Makati City on March 08, 2005 and Community Tax Certificate No. 06027380 issued at City of Manila on January 12, 2005, respectively.

DBP - Community Tax Certificate No. 00020884 - Makati City
Issued on January 5, 2005

Doc. No. 322
Page No. 66
Book No. III
Series of 2005

Sgd. CANDIDO G. DEL ROSARIO, JR.
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"Member of the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation
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Your new 'Residencia' in Xavierville

ARISTOTLE once said, "As men are bound to desolation, so is he for happiness, but greater is the fragment for bliss for it is the end-purpose of man." The busyness of the city may be a perfect picture of that desolated state. What with the traffic congestion, blaring of vehicle horns, pollution, and stressful deadlines, who wouldn't feel lost and desolated in the middle of all these? And it is in this situation that the search for bliss becomes more anticipated and equally harder to find. But not anymore... As if a savior who rises high in the middle of it all, Residencia de Regina becomes the perfect representation of that blissful state. With its comfort and privacy, the search for bliss would not anymore add to your stresses.

Residencia de Regina is the first high-rise condominium of BANFF Realty and Development Corp (BANFF), the same company that gave us the wonderful Reginaville Subdivision Series. Consistent to its mission of creating a distinctive living environment for Filipinos, BANFF breaks new ground by giving a different definition to urban living through Residencia de Regina.

At Residencia de Regina, you will feel like a part of a complete community, with everything just within your reach - transportation, schools, supermarket, churches, hospitals, and other commercial and recreational centers. Located in the middle of all these necessities, you can never be lost in Residencia de Regina. But the most precious prize that you get is that in spite of feeling like a part of a community, and being in the middle of it all, you can still have the privacy of being in your own world.

From the chaos of the streets, you can be transformed into a world of sophistication and tranquility once you take your first step into Residencia de Regina. Its design presents a distinct blend of modern eclectic design that implies an innovative convergence of peaceful and comfortable living.

The Residencia de Regina has a total of 305 residential units, 2 commercial spaces, and a penthouse. Studio type units have a floor area ranging from 24 sqm. to 26 sqm. It's a perfect space for you to enjoy by yourself or share with a companion. Two-bedroom units are the perfect home for young families. Everything seems to have a right place in it, so it is definitely what you could call a home.

Residencia de Regina does not just end in giving you a good life; it shows you how a good life is lived. With its modern facilities and features, you can be sure that you are safe and comfortable in the place. You can spend a sunny day hanging out in its beautiful lap pool or spend a rainy day slouching and watching the scenic view from your own unit. The whole structure is safe and secure with its 24-hour security command center and fire-detection system so you can just leave all your worries outside Residencia's walls.

Most of all, all these comforts you could have at a price within your means. Residencia de Regina implies that no amount of money can equal to the best things in life such as peacefulness, comfort, and security. And with these luxurious amenities, the good life can come at an affordable cost: concierge; residential lobby with lounge area; all units with scenic view; provision for 2 telephone lines; individual mailboxes; lap swimming pool; function area; sun deck; Porte Cochere (along Xavierville Ave.); 2 interior finished Mitsubishi passenger elevators; 3 level ample car and scooter parking; CCTV Security system interfaced to cable TV; cable and Internet ready; 24-hour security command center; back-up power generator for all common areas and allocated power to each unit; sufficient fire exits; stairwell pressurization system; fire detection and automatic fire sprinkler systems; cistern and water tank to ensure sufficient water supply; garbage chute.

The Residencia de Regina will definitely give a new perspective to life. It's simply life... well-lived. Life's problems may become inevitable, but so are life's comforts. The Residencia is a perfect proof of this.

GLOBE AFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR GMA'S TOURISM PROGRAM

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo graced the celebration of the 23rd anniversary of the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) recently. Accompanied by MIAA General Manager Alfonso G. Cusi, Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Joseph "Ace" Durano, Sen. Richard Gordon, and members of the Cabinet and the diplomatic corps, the President conducted an ocular tour of the state-of-the-art facilities of the new Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 (NAIA 3), which is scheduled to open in June. Industry partners from the private sector, notably Globe Telecom, met with the President to express their support of the government's efforts to build world-class airports and promote the Philippines as one of the best international tourist destinations. Photo shows President Arroyo with Globe representatives (from left) Rita Nisperos, corporate marketing head; Nikko Acosta, head of international services; Dodo Reyes, head of media and advertising and Heidi Dyangko of Globe International Services, affirming their support for the Arroyo government's tourism initiatives. Globe had earlier worked with the DOT on landmark projects such as the Meet and Assist program and the 2004 Paskong Pinoy celebration, and is continuing the partnership this year with its sponsorship of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Congress in April and the Island Caravan tour package for summer.

CDO warns public against unscrupulous traders

ONE of the country's top meat processing firms has warned the consuming public against unscrupulous traders who sell processed and canned meat products at atrociously high prices.

"We have received evidence that there are indeed unscrupulous people posing as CDO dealers and salesmen, when in fact they are not," said Bong V. Cendana, national sales manager of CDO-Foodsphere Inc.

The modus operandi of these people, Cendana said, is that they offer retail stores or consumers with CDO products at a higher price than the company's price list on promise that free logistical equipment such as freezer and hotdog griddle will be given for a minimum purchase.

"The truth is they are simply out to swindle the public and malign the name of our company," he said.

In its investigation, CDO-Foodsphere said the false dealers have been introducing themselves as CDO salesmen to demand cash, reservation fee or deposits in exchange for logistics such as hotdog griddle and freezers.

Among the names reportedly used by the bogus salesmen were Arnold dela Paz, Marick Pineda, Macky delos Reyes, Ken Medina, Ronald Lim, Roberto Cajudo, Rogelio Morales, Richard and Sunico.

"They target sari-sari stores, wet market stalls, and direct household members," Cendana said. "Our company has no such program requiring deposits, down payments nor reservation fees."

Cendana advised the public to transact only with authorized dealers and salesmen of CDO and report misrepresentation by any dealer or salesman through the company hotline (02) 294-1111 local 214 or 237.

CDO is one of the top local producers of corned beef, karne norte, beef loaf, sausages, fresh frozen meat, canned viand items and meat toppings, all of which are of export quality. Recently, Yum! Restaurants International (YRI), one of the world's largest operators of quick service restaurants (QSR), named CDO-Foodsphere as its "Most Improved Supplier".

Philippines SuperFerry

2GO WELCOMES AGRICULTURE SECRETARY YAP

Photo shows the Aboitiz freight group 2GO welcoming Agriculture Sec. Yap onboard the SuperFerry 15 to get the latter immersed with the Aboitiz supply chain, specifically RRTS - a logistics method that enables trade by bridging markets involving Luzon and Mindanao. Shown are (from left): Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap; Mike Camahort, 2GO COO; Susan Valdez, 2GO CEO; and Patrick Perez, Aboitiz Terops AVP. Through RRTS or Road Roro Terminal System, shipments are no longer off-loaded from cargo trucks, thereby cutting down on stevedoring cost, consequently ensuring good quality and price stability of produce. Not long ago, the DA tested the Roro portion of the Strong Republic Nautical Highway which 2GO RRTS serviced and found out that the RRTS method was not only successful in identifying the commodity needs of Mindoro, Negros and Panay Islands that can be replenished with other produce within the highway, but also in inducing tourism traffic from Luzon and Mindanao to Boracay through Caticlan.

Product FILES

EQ Breathable demos in supermarkets

IF YOU have seen the breathable diaper test done by Ruby Rodriguez on TV, the same test will be done in various supermarkets. This is your chance to see the actual demo to check if the diaper is breathable or not. To make it more convincing, we came up with a Breathability Challenge by testing EQ diaper side by side a brand X diaper. Demos starts April to May nationwide.

EQ
Economy & Quality
Disposable Baby Diapers
L

IBP Baguio confab

THE INTEGRATED Bar of the Philippines (IBP) is scheduled to hold its annual convention in Baguio City from April 19 to 23, which will be held at the CAP-John Hay Convention Center. This year's convention theme is "Alleviating Poverty and Resolving the Fiscal Crisis: Challenges for the Legal System". The theme underscores the resolve of the legal community to take an active stance in the bid to address the most pressing issues in the country today. The coovention will highlight the collective resolve of the country's lawyers to apply the power of the law and of the legal system to help correct social and political imbalances that perpetuate poverty in the country.

Country's first MBA for coops

RECOGNIZING the important contribution of cooperatives to the Philippine economy, the Ateneo Graduate School of Business (AGSB) and the Institute for Coop Excellence (Coop Institute) have jointly developed the Master in Business Administration in Cooperatives Management. The course is the country's first MBA specifically designed for top and middle-level coop managers and will be offered by AGSB this coming school year.

The MBA in Cooperatives Management aims to sharpen the business knowledge and managerial skills of coop leaders and managers and teaches the application of coop concepts, values and principles for competitive advantage. The course combines the acclaimed Ateneo-Regis MBA program, which stresses workplace-based and experience-driven learning; with the curriculum program of the Coop Institute.

Coops contribute about 16 percent to the country's gross domestic product and have generated almost 400,000 jobs across the country. In 2001, coop leaders and managers determined that continuing training and education would be needed for coops to grow and expand. The National Confederation of Cooperatives (Nattco), which has over 1,500 coops in membership, helped establish the Coop Institute as an independent training institute that would address the competency requirements of managers, leaders and elected officers of cooperatives. Nattco and other affiliated federations and unions helped develop a competency-based coop learning program over a series of workshops.

"This is the beginning of a systematic effort to build career management professionals within the cooperative movement in the country," said Dr. Caridad Maadil, Coop Institute chair. "Through this program, we would like to develop coop managers who have the competence to grow the business and prove that coops have an important role in economic development."

Maadil said the institute had chosen AGSB as a partner for the effort since the school, aside from being adjudged the country's top business school, also shared the same values and principles as institutions of higher learning.

The MBA in Cooperatives Management follows the Ateneo tradition of values and ethics-based programs and IT-oriented courses. With 42 units and an accelerated eight-week program per subject, the non-thesis course can be completed between one and half to two and a half years. The course will initially be offered in the AGSB campus in Rockwell Center but may eventually extend class locations to Cebu, Subic, Sta. Rosa in Laguna and in Bacolod City and Davao City.

AUTO HAUS BMW AT TRANS SPORTS SHOW 2005

Auto Haus BMW has confirmed its participation as a major corporate exhibitor at Trans Sport Show 2005, forthcoming this April 20 to 24, at the Megatrade Hall of SM Megamall B, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City. The company will showcase the 2005 BMW 3 series automobile, BMW R1200GS and RT sport bikes and the BMW F650 GS motorbike. Organized by TradeShow International Inc (TSI), the Open Class Car Competition is still the main crowd attraction with over 50 of the best-restored classic and contemporary cars vying for the much-coveted 'Best of Show' awards. Photo shows during the contract signing (from left): Sophie delos Santos, TSI president; and Eymard Aquino, Auto Haus BMW vice-president for aftersales.

GRAND RAFFLE
Win a Brand New Car!
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TOYOTA VIOS AT BEDAN ALUMNI GOLF TOURNEY

The 2005 Alumni Homecoming Raffle Draw, which was extended to allow more Bedan alumni, family and friends to win the attractive raffle prizes, will finally be held on Friday, May 6, during the Awards Socials of the 3rd Abbot's Cup Golf Tournament, at the Forest Hills Golf and Country Club in Cogeo, Antipolo City. Photo shows Rt. Rev. Tarcisio Narciso, OSB, Abbot Chancellor of San Beda College (3rd from left), posing in front of the major raffle prize - a brand new Toyota Vios, together with the Alumni Raffle project organizers (from left): Peewee Leynes (HS'66 batch rep), Dr. Jimmy Galvez-Tan (HS'66 rep and SBC Alumni Foundation president), Dr. Conrad Oca (HS'81 batch president), Monet Gaskell (HS'70 rep), and Roy Buencamino (HS'81 batch rep). More than 25 consolation prizes including trips to HK/China and Boracay, TV's and DVD players, personal refs and stereo components, digital cameras and other raffle treats will also be drawn. For more information about the Grand Alumni Raffle Draw and the 3rd Abbot's Cup Golf Tournament, please call Conrad Oca or Gysrell Jiloca (527-3554 or 523-5267), Roy Buencamino or Josie Rafael (732-0136), or the SBC Alumni Office through Wilma Abellanosa (735-5995 or 735-6011 local 2740).

University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY AND TO BID

The University of the Philippines - Diliman Bids & Awards Committee (BAC) invites interested contractors to submit their prequalification documents for the Infrastructure Construction & Renovation Projects of UP Diliman for the period April 2005 to May 2006. Only licensed contractors (at least Category C) with IAC registration will be accepted. Specialty contractors for Landscaping, Electrical, Waterproofing, Communication and other Infrastructure specialty works will also be prequalified as separate groups. Contractors who are eligible will be invited to bid on the following Proposed Projects:

Project Title	Budget	Probable Bidding Date	Project Duration	Project Title	Budget	Probable Bidding Date	Project Duration
NIP Building, Phase 4	P40M	May / June 2005	210 cd's	Third Floor of MSI Bldg.	P12M	May / June 2005	180 cd's
CSSP-FC (Phase 1)	P43M	October 2005	360 cd's	Renovation of Malcolm Hall	P10 M	June / July 2005	180 cd's
Miscellaneous projects costing from P100T to less than P5M.							
For other projects below P5M, please check subsequent advertisements on the EPS on www.procurementservice.net and the Office of the Campus Architect's website at www.upd.edu.ph/~oca							

Prequalification forms are now available at the Office of the Campus Architect (OCA), Coral Building, Lakandula Street corner De los Reyes Street, UP-Diliman, Quezon City, upon payment of P300.00. Please call 920-5301 local 8032 / 8033 or 927-8656 for further inquiries.

A letter of intent addressed to the Chancellor through the BAC is to be submitted to the Office of the Campus Architect together with the accomplished forms. To be included in the initial pool of qualified/eligible contractors, **the deadline for submission of prequalification or eligibility documents is on or before 5 p.m. of April 22, 2005.** The BAC will still accept late applications provided that applicants submit their prequalification and eligibility documents at least forty-five (45) days before the scheduled bidding for the particular project. For more details and updates on projects to be bid, please regularly visit either the UP-Diliman and/or OCA website at www.upd.edu.ph/~oca.

All particulars relative to the eligibility process, bidding, evaluation of bids and awards of contracts, and other related matters, shall be governed by the provisions of RA 9184 and other applicable rules and regulations. The BAC shall use the following criteria in evaluating eligibility:

Technical:
1. Complete documents submitted
2. Active PCAB License
3. Categorization, based on PCAB License:

Financial:
1. Current Assets/Current Liabilities Ratio greater or equal to "1.0"
2. Current Owner's / Stockholders' Equity:

Category	Allowable Range of Contract Cost (in Pesos)	Category	Equity
Small A	Up to 0.5 Million	Small A	P 100 Thousand
Small B	Up to 10 Million	Small B	P 2 Million
Medium A	Up to 50 Million	Medium A	P 10 Milion
Medium B	Up to 100 Million	Medium B	P 20 Million
Large A	Up to 150 Million	Large A	P 30 Million
Large B	Less than or above 150 Million	Large B	P 40 Million

The time & date of pre-bid conference, submission and opening of bids, shall be announced and posted at the OCA bulletin board and website. Bid documents shall be issued only to eligible contractors upon payment of the non-refundable cost of documents.

The University reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any required formality in the bids received, or to accept such bids or to award any part thereof to any bidder/s whose bid/s is/are considered most advantageous to the University. The University assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify any firm for any expense or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of bid proposals, nor does it guarantee that a selection will be made.

(Sgd.) **SERGIO S. CAO**
Chancellor

(PDI - April 12 & 19, 2005)

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PUBLIC NOTICES

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Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late VICENTE C. CRISOSTOMO was extrajudicially settled by his heirs as per Doc. No. 73, Page No. 15, Book No. 457, Series of 2005 under Notary Public Lucila M. Lawas Yulok (PDI-April 5, 12 & 19, 2005)

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10th comprehensive real estate seminar (CRES) at Mandaluyong

THE Real Estate Brokers' Association of the Philippines (Rebap)- Mandaluyong Chapter, considered as one of the top broker producers of the DTI-sponsored Real Estate Licensure Examination, spearheaded by its president CRB Julius G. Topacio shall conduct its 10th Comprehensive Real Estate Seminar & Review on April 16, 23, 30 and May 7, 14, 2005 at Rebap's Training Room, 4th level 409 Shaw, Mandaluyong City. For more details please call Michelle, Secretariat Office at 727-6915 and 727-0701 local 123 or email us at info@rebapmandaluyong.com

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NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Quezon City

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIDDING

The National Food Authority (NFA) wishes to announce that it will be conducting a bidding on **May 04, 2005** at **10:00 a.m.** at the **FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER BUILDING FIT Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila,** among all interested rice suppliers for the **supply of maximum 200,000 MT, 5% MOLSO long grain white rice, 5% and 15% brokens in 50 kilograms net capacity polypropylene bags** with an appropriated budget from corporate resources of **Php 3.7B. Source countries shall be Thailand, Vietnam, China, Pakistan, Australia and/or U.S.A.**

Any interested suppliers are required to submit quotations for all specifications on CFR FO basis, Documents Against Acceptance (D/A) with a tenor of thirty (30) days from receipt of NFA of the complete set of original documents for payment. Arrival period as follows:

Arrival Period	Percentage of Volume to be Offered
Not later than 15 June 2005	At least 50%
Not later than 15 July 2005	Balance

Government suppliers and private suppliers who have delivered to the NFA within **the last two (2) years (2003/2004) and do not have a bad track record may be awarded the following maximum volume:**

SUPPLIER	VOLUME
Government (with good track record)	150,000 MT
Private (with good track record	25,000 MT
Government/private (without track record)	15,000 MT

However, suppliers and/or source companies with pending import-related accounts/liability prior 2003 are considered to have bad track records and are not allowed to participate in the bid.

Minimum volume to be offered per supplier shall be 10,000 MT per specification. Vessels to be utilized should have a maximum load capacity of 15,000 MT.

All bidders are required to post a bid bond equivalent to 10% of the highest value of offered quantity in the form of cashier's/manager's check issued by a reputable bank in Metro Manila or an irrevocable stanby Letter of Credit issued by a reputable commercial bank or in the case of an irrevocable stand-by L/C issued by a foreign bank, the same shall be confirmed by a reputable local bank.

Winning bidders are required to submit a performance bond equivalent to 10% of the value of the awarded quantity within three (3) banking days after receipt of the notice of award in the form cashier's/manager's check issued by a reputable bank in Metro Manila or an irrevocable stanby Letter of Credit issued by a reputable commercial bank or in the case of an irrevocable stand-by L/C issued by a foreign bank, the same shall be confirmed by a reputable local bank. Bid bond can be converted to performance bond.

List of Eligibility Requirements and instructions to bidders maybe secured starting **12 April 2005** thru **MR. TOMAS R. ESCAREZ**, Assistant Department Manager and **MR. NESTOR U. PUANGCO**, Division Chief III, **Directorate for Marketing Operations, 5th Floor, NFA, Matimyas Bldg., 101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave., Quezon City with telephone numbers 712-1564; 742-4140; 743-8696; 711-7433; 740-1977; 712-1708; and 712-1572.**

The terms of reference and offer sheets will be available from **April 12 to 28, 2005** (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.) upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P7,500.00.

The **pre-bidding conference** will be held on **April 21, 2005 at 10:00 a.m.** at the **FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER BUILDING FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila.**

Submission of bids will be on May 04, 2005 between 8:00 a.m. to 9:55 a.m. at the FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER BUILDING FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila. Opening of bids will start exactly at 10:00 a.m.

The National Food Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals, to waive any required formality or defect therein and may accept the bid/s which is deemed most advantageous to the Agency.

(Sgd.) **JESSUP P. NAVARRO**
Deputy Administrator and
Chairman, BAC

(PDI - April 12 & 19, 2005)

JOB Market
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CEBU HOLDINGS INC.
AN AFFILIATE OF AYALA LAND, INC.

NOTICE OF REGULAR ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the regular annual stockholders' meeting of **CEBU HOLDINGS, INC.** will be held at the City Sports Club Cebu, Cebu City on **TUESDAY, 26 APRIL 2005** at **11:00 A.M.** with the following

AGENDA

1. Determination of Quorum
2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting
3. Annual Report of Officers
4. New Business
   - Ratification of all Acts and Resolutions of the Board of Directors and Management adopted in the ordinary course of business during the preceding year.
5. Election of Directors (including the Independent Directors)
6. Election of Auditors and Fixing their Remuneration
7. Consideration of such other business as may properly come before the meeting
8. Adjournment

Stockholders of record as of **09 March 2005** shall be the stockholders entitled to vote at this meeting. As per By-Laws, the Stock and Transfer Books of the Corporation will be closed from **06 to 26 April 2005,** inclusive.

Makati City, 16 March 2005.

FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RENATO O. MARZAN
Corporate Secretary

(PDI–April 19, 2005)

CEBU PROPERTY VENTURES & DEVELOPMENT CORP.

NOTICE OF REGULAR ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the regular annual stockholders' meeting of **CEBU PROPERTY VENTURES AND DEVELOPMENT CORP.** will be held at the City Sports Club Cebu, Cebu City on **TUESDAY, 26 APRIL 2005** at **3:00 P.M.** with the following

AGENDA

1. Determination of Quorum
2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting
3. Annual Report of Officers
4. New Business
   - Ratification of all Acts and Resolutions of the Board of Directors and Management adopted in the ordinary course of business during the preceding year.
5. Election of Directors (including the Independent Directors)
6. Election of Auditors and Fixing their Remuneration
7. Consideration of such other business as may properly come before the meeting
8. Adjournment

Stockholders of record as of **09 March 2005** shall be the stockholders entitled to vote at this meeting. As per By-Laws, the Stock and Transfer Books of the Corporation will be closed from **28 March to 26 April 2005**, inclusive.

Makati City, 16 March 2005.

FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RENATO O. MARZAN
Corporate Secretary

(PDI–April 19, 2005)

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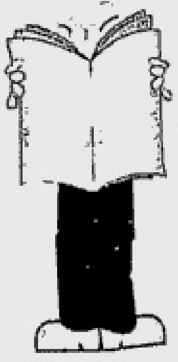

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1. **DOH 2. BFAD 3. STATISTICIAN III, SG-18, OSEC-DOHB-STAT3-9-2000** 4. Bachelor's degree relevant to the job; 2 years of relevant experience; 8 hours of relevant training of Laws; Eligibility: CS Professional, Second Level Eligibility

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(PDI – April 19, 2005)

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Collection District II - B
MANILA INTERNATIONAL CONTAINER PORT

April 15, 2005

NOTICE OF PUBLIC AUCTION

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 2601 to 2610 of the TCCP, as amended, in relation to CMO 5-2003 dated March 17, 2003, and CMO 18-2003 dated 25 July 2003, there will be a Public Auction Sale through SEALED BIDDING, to be conducted by this Port on **April 21, 2005, 2:30 P.M.**, to be held at the 2nd Floor, MICP Building, North Harbor, Isla Puting Bato, Tondo, Manila, the herein-described article in lot. Said article shall be available for viewing on **April 20, 2005**. In the event of a failed bidding, the second auction shall be conducted on the first business day following the first bidding.

Lot No. 005-03 JM CATTLE FARM S.I. No. 03-051 7th Advertisement 'As Is Where Is' Floor Price: Php263,577.60	480 bags, 50 kgs./bag Thailand Rice Well-Milled Dragon Brand Note: Only duly accredited NFA Rice Traders will be allowed to participate Location: ICTSI CY, Contr. No. GESU-2244886
Lot No. 057-03 PR SARISARI STORE S.I. 03-136 7th Advertisement 'As Is Where Is' Floor Price: Php109,977.60	200 Bags, 50 kgs./bag Thai Premium White Rice (Platinum Brand) Note: To be sold pursuant to Section 2607 of the TCCP, as amended. Proceeds to be held in trust. Location: Warehouse 1, POM.
Lot No. 012-05 DARALA TRADING A.P. No. 05-007 4th Advertisement 'As Is Where Is' Floor Price: Php87,001.60	971 boxes, 70 pcs./box Apples Note: Aside from the bid price the winning bidder will shoulder the electrical charges due to ICTSI. Location: ICTSI CY, Contr. No. OOLU-6402508

Basic Guidelines

1 File the duly accomplished Registration Form (name, address, TIN and other relevant circumstances to be indicated).
2 Php2,000.00 Registration Fee (Non-Refundable).
3. Php20,000.00 Cash Bond (Refundable).
4 Submission to the ACDD Proof of Qualification involving regulated commodities, such as rice and animal feeds (NFA and Feed Millers' Licenses).
5. The highest bidder shall be required to pay 50% of the bid price either in cash and/or manager's Check immediately and the balance of 50% shall be paid within the next business day.
6. After the second failed bidding, a particular lot may be offered to all qualified bidders for negotiated sale, subject to compliance of the requirements under Section IV-J of CMO 5-2003.
7 Payment by Cashier's/Manager's Checks to the BOC/MICP shall bear the following:
   a. Pay to the order of Land Bank of the Philippines - BOC MICP E.O.
   b. For credit of the Bureau of Customs.
   For the account of:

Bidder

For further details, please contact Mr. Isidro A. Pre, Chief, Auction & Cargo Disposal Division, MICP, Tel. No. 247-09-77

(Sgd.) Atty. FELIPE A. BARTOLOME, CESO V
District Collector of Customs

(PDI – April 19, 2005)

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PD REF NO. PB050330-PP0020 / PR NO. ITASD-05-009024

The NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, BIDS AND AWARD COMMITTEE FOR HEAD OFFICE, wishes to invite interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid on the item listed below

Quantity	Item Description	PR No.	Approved Budget
1 LOT	SUPPLY, DELIVERY, INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING OF STATIONARY SINGLE CELL BATTERIES, 300 AMPERE HOUR @ 10 HOURS RATE, VENTED LEAD ACID TYPE, 48 CELL PER SITE (960 CELLS) CONNECTED IN SERIES-PARALLEL TO FORM 2 X 300 AH 48 V DC BATTERY STRING COMPLETE WITH CONNECTORS, JUMPER WIRE, ELECTROLYTE, VENT PLUG, TWO (2) COLLAPSIBLE RACK PER SITE AND ACCESSORIES	ITASD-05-009024	PhP16,400,000.00

1. Bid Documents will be available for issuance starting April 11, 2005 to May 10, 2005 from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at the BAC Secretariat Office, National Transmission Corporation, Materials Management Division (MMD), Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City upon payment of non-refundable fee of One Thousand Six Hundred Forty Pesos (P1,640.00) per set.
2 Deadline for submission, receipt and opening of bids shall be on or before 2:00 P.M. of May 11, 2005 at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City. If the date is declared non-working day, the new deadline for submission shall be announced through a Bid Bulletin. Submission of documents must be clear, legible and readable Late submission and/or incomplete bid documents shall not be accepted.
3 Pre-bid conference will be held on **April 26, 2005 at 2:00 P.M.** at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City.
4. All particulars relative to the eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids and award of contract shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations-A of Republic Act 9184.
5 TransCo reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the corporation.
6. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) ANTONIO G. LABAYANI
Chairman, Bids and Award Committee

(PDI - April 13 & 19 2005)

DBP
Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO BID

The Development Bank of the Philippines will receive sealed bids on April 27, 2005, 2:00 p.m., 12th Floor, Suite 5, of the DBP Head Office, Sen. Gil Puyat Ave. cor. Makati Ave., Makati City for the following properties on CASH BASIS:

CODE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	MINIMUM SELLING PRICE
REAL ESTATE			
BATANGAS			
AM-CP-051	Bo. Natu, Rosario	89,371 m², 4 contiguous vacant agricultural lots (TCT Nos. T-118608 to T-118611)	P 6,618,600.00
AM-CP-052	Brgy. Namuco, Rosario	90 m² commercial lot (TCT No. 118604) with bldg. & imp.	P 1,638,000.00
CAVITE			
DAS-007	Bo. San Juan, Gen. Trias	654 m², 3 parcels of residential lots (TCT Nos. T-102914 to T-1024916) with bldg. & imp.	P 2,200,000.00
DAS-008	Poblacion, Rosario	442m², 2 parcels of residential lots (TCT Nos. T-1024912 and T-1024913) with bldg. & imp.	P 3,058,500.00
RIZAL			
	Roseville Subd., Brgy. San Juan, Taytay	222 subdivision lots with 61 housing models:	
AM-CP-053a	Blk. 1 Lots 1 - 22	1,018 m² TCT Nos. T-659896 to T-659917	P 2,044,000.00
AM-CP-053b	2 1 - 21	955 m² TCT Nos. T-659918 to T-659938	P 1,599,000.00
AM-CP-053c	3 1 - 13	622 m² TCT Nos. T-659939 to T-659951	P 622,000.00
AM-CP-053d	4 1 - 15	695 m² TCT Nos. T-659952 to T-659966	P 1,042,500.00
AM-CP-053e	5 1 - 26	1,273 m² TCT Nos. T-659967 to T-659992	P 2,617,000.00
AM-CP-053f	6 1 - 17	830 m² TCT Nos. T-659993 to T-659995, T-659882 to T-659895	P 1,993,800.00
AM-CP-053g	7 1 - 16	1,129 m² TCT Nos. T-659864 to T-659879	P 3,882,200.00
AM-CP-053h	8 1 - 16	1,079 m² TCT Nos. T-659853 to T-659863, T-659794 to T-659798	P 3,761,400.00
AM-CP-053i	9 1 - 22	1,038 m² TCT Nos. T-659799 to T-659820	P 1,868,400.00
AM-CP-053j	10 1 - 22	994 m² TCT Nos. T-659821 to T-659842	P 3,483,200.00
AM-CP-053k	11 1 - 20	950 m² TCT Nos. T-659918 to T-659937	P. 960,000.00
PAMPANGA			
AM-JA-055	Bo. San Isidro, Minalin	21,408 m2 agro-industrial lot (TCT No. 368096-R) with factory/residential bldg & imp.	P 26,102,900.00
CHATTELS (sale on per item/set and "as-is, where-is" basis)			
AM-JA-056a	Brgy. San Isidro, Minalin, Pampanga	2 units conveyorized powder coating overn, 1 unit Shearing Machine, AMADA type; 1 unit hydraulic press, 50 tons capacity; 1 unit power press, 30 tons capacity	P 306,825.00
AM-JA-056b	No. 6 Banner St., Bagong Ilog, Pasig	1 unit PVL shrinking machine; 2 units hydraulic press, 250 tons capacity	P. 761,250.00

BIDDERS ARE REMINDED:

1. To inspect the properties to determine their actual condition before the bidding;
2 To submit in DBP's official bid form available at the AMD-Acquired Assets, 2nd Floor, DBP Head Office during office hours; and
3. To be on time. No bids will be accepted once unsealing of the bids commences. The sale shall be subject to other terms and conditions which may be imposed by the Bank.

DBP RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE BANK. THE DECISION OF THE BANK IS FINAL AND BINDING

For inquiries, please call telephone numbers: 892-1566 / 893-7172 or 818-9511 local 2218/2252 for code starting with AM; and 818-9511 local 1427 Code starting with DAS.

ASSET MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

(PDI – April 18 & 19, 2005)

St. Gregory the Great alumni grand reunion

ALUMNI of St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Tabaco City, Albay will have its Grand Reunion at Immaculate Conception Seminary, FIAT House, Brgy. Cabinitan, and Amenia Resort, Virac, Catanduanes on April 28-30, 2005. Assembly and overnight stay at SGGS at 6 p.m. on April 27, 2005 and departure for Virac at 5:00 a.m. on April 28, 2005. For details please contact Fr. Santi Fernandez – 8724392 and Atty. Nitoy Arcilla (Manila); Fr. Johnny Lizaso and Mr. Ursus de Quiros (Catanduanes); Fr. Dave Ramoso - 0524846086 and Mr. Bert David (Albay); Msgr. Cris Bernarte Jr. - 0528204603.

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IN MEMORIAM

On the 1st Death Anniversary of

LIBRADA FRANCISCO RAMOS

of Libis, Maybangcal, Morong, Rizal

On the 19th of April 2005, her 1st death anniversary, Mass and prayers will be offered at St. Jerome's Parish, Morong, Rizal.

We are very grateful to all who keep our beloved **INANG** in their memory and who continue to pray for her.

Bing, Pat, Lucy, Salud, Willy, Virgie
and granddaughters Bingbing, Paula, Dionne

ALFREDO S. OCHOA

Past Grand Knight, Knights of Columbus 1991-1993

March 28, 1928 - April 18, 2005

His wife **Asuncion Sevilla Ochoa** (†); children **Ana Marie & Antonio Fernandez, Anabelle, Ana Rose, Daisy & Fernando Santos, Diana, Doris & Vicente Torres, Sylvia & Cipriano Doblon,** and **Cecilia**; and grandchildren **Alan, Nina, Ma. Elena, Darren, Nerisa, Denise, Celine & Simon** request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie at the Loyola Chapels in Guadalupe, Makati City.

Cremation follows the 10:00 a.m. Mass on Thursday, April 21, 2005.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

Mario A. Villariba, M.D.

September 21, 1922 – April 14, 2005

of Banga, Meycauayan, Bulacan

U.S.T. Medicine '54

Survived by his wife Teresita; daughters Maritess, Jacqueline, and Clarissa; son-in-law Rosendo; grandchildren and great grandchild; his brothers Cesar, Oscar and Ricardo; and sisters Luz, Araceli, Zenaida and Bella.

His body lies in state at his residence in Banga, Meycauayan. Burial will be on Wednesday, April 20, 2005, 2 p.m. at Meycauayan Cemetery.

God has you in his keeping; we have you in our hearts....

IN LOVING MEMORY

On the **Second Death Anniversary** of

JOCELYN ROJAS ABESAMIS

Who passed on to Eternal Life on April 19, 2003

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass shall be offered today, April 19, 2005, at the following Churches:

Garden of Love, *Loyola Memorial Park* .... 5:00 p.m. Mass
Marikina City
Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish .... 6:45 a.m.
Legaspi St., Project 4, Quezon City
Monastery of St. Clare .... 6:00 a.m.
Katipunan Road, Quezon City
Sta. Maria dela Strada .... 6:00 a.m.
Katipunan Avenue, Quezon City
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish .... 6:30 a.m.
13th Ave., Quezon City
St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish .... 7:30 a.m.
Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City
Transfiguration of Our Lord Parish .... 6:00 a.m.
18th Avenue, Quezon City
St. Francis of Assisi Parish .... 6:00 a.m.
Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija (April 17 & 20)
La Resurreccion Parish .... 6:00 a.m.
Victoria, Laguna
Ubanon Church .... 5:00 p.m.
Ubanon, Catbalogan, Samar
San Bartolomew Church .... 5:30 a.m.
Catbalogan, Samar

We, her husband, **Justice Bernardo P. Abesamis**; sons, **Atty. Ferdie, Atty. Edmund, Engr. Bernardo, Jr., Atty. Al.** and Quezon City Councilor **Rommel**; daughters **Moonyeen Abesamis-Ayache** (†) and **Dr. Gigi Abesamis-Recasata**; daughters-in-law, **Josie, Janet, Miles, Lowie** and **Bernadette**; sons-in-law, **Rudy Ayache** and **Dr. Jay Recasata**; grandchildren, **A-jay & Jay-B; Jeric, Justin, Joshua & Juliano; Gideon & Carlos; Therese, Miggy & Katy; Micah; Nicco, Nikki, Nathan & Neo**; brother, **Judge Pablito M. Rojas**, sisters, **Dr. Mila Rojas-Navarette** and **Tessie R. Yulo**; nephews and nieces, request readers, relatives and friends to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

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OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS: ❶ Copy of Death Certificate ❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS
DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIEMS
• FREE OBIT DESIGN

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

PACITA T. PUA GIOK TIN

who passed away
in the grace of our Lord on April 1, 2005

wish to express our heartfelt gratitude and sincerest appreciation to all those who sent flowers and messages of sympathy and who condoled and comforted us in our hour of bereavement.

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

LUISA T. PUA GIOK BEE

who passed away
in the grace of our Lord on March 23, 2005

wish to express our heartfelt gratitude and sincerest appreciation to all those who sent flowers and messages of sympathy and who condoled and comforted us in our hour of bereavement.

CLASSIFIEDS

LIGHT
RAIL
TRANSIT
AUTHORITY

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

ITB No. 02-008-05

The Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) invites interested contractors only with PCAB license Medium B Category specializing in Electrical Works to apply for eligibility and to bid for

RIV No.	QTY.	ITEM/DESCRIPTION	APPROVED BUDGET
L-05-004	1 Lot	SUPPLY OF LABOR AND MATERIALS FOR TESTING AND REPAIR OF RECTIFIER SUBSTATION	Php 17,071,338.00

Bid documents can be obtained from the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) Secretariat at the Ground Floor, Administration Building, LRTA Compound, Aurora Blvd., Pasay City, during regular office hours starting **April 12-April 20, 2005** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Four Thousand Pesos (Php 4,000.00).

Site inspection will be held on April 21, 2005, Thursday, 10:00 a.m. For the purpose of clarifying issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on April 26, 2005, Tuesday, 10:30 a.m., at the above address.

The BAC Secretariat shall receive sealed bids not later than **May 12, 2005, Thursday** at **9:00 A.M.** and shall then be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

LRTA reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, without assuming any obligation whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of its bids, and will entertain only such bid/s established to be the most advantageous to the LRTA.

(Sgd.) LT COL CESAR B CHAVEZ (GSC) MNSA
Deputy Administrator
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – April 19, 2005)

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

NPC-MMSD 2005-011

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)-MMSD of NPC invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following requirements.

Schedule	Date/Time & Place of Bidding	Item Description	PR No./Inquiry No.	ABC
I	May 16, 2005 2:00 p.m Kañao Room	Laboratory Equipment for Oriental Mindoro Substation & 69 KV	PB050412-MMVB2679 (PB2)	2,375,000.00
II		Mechanical Parts for Bantayan DPP "Pielstick"	DC050331-MM-JP2765 (PB)	1,232,000.00
III	May 17, 2005 10:00 Kañao Room	Mechanical Parts for MONLOD/Casiguran DPP "Dale"	PB050417-MMVB2819	1,888,500.00

NOTE: A Pre-bidding Conference will be held for the following bidding schedules:

Schedule	Date	Time	Place
Schedule I - III	May 3, 2005	2:00 p.m.	Kañao Function Room

Complete sets of Application form for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be obtained from the Materials Management Services Division, Materials Management Dept., of NPC, Diliman, Quezon City with Tel. No. 9245357/9245477 upon payment of non-refundable fee of PHP1,000.00 for Schedule 1 and PHP500.00 for Schedules II & III starting on april 19, 2005, from 8:00 to 12:00 noon only. No bid documents will be issued 3 days before the date of bidding.

Bids will be received at the assigned Bidding Room, MMSD, MMD, NPC, Diliman, Quezon City on the date and time specified above after which Eligibility Requirements and Bid Proposals will be opened in the presence of attending bidders. Certificate of Registration issued by PSD/MMSD will be honored provided that the Certification is still valid.

Prospective Bidders shall signify conformance to bidding terms and conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution in accordance with the IRR of Republic Act. No. 9184.

The Bidder shall furnish as part of his/her bid, a bid security in the amount equivalent to a percentage of the approved budget for the contract to be bid in the form of Cash, Manager's/Cashier's Check, Irrevocable Letter of Credit - One Percent (1%), Bank Guarantee - One and a half percent (1.5%), Surety Bond - Two and a half percent (2.5%), penal and callable on demand issued by a Surety or Insurance Company accredited by the Office of the Insurance Commission.

NPC reserves the right to reject any or all bids at any time prior to award of contract, waive any defects therein, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Corporation, without thereby incurring any of the following: a) liability whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of the bids and b) obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the grounds for the basis of the BAC's action.

(Sgd.) LORENZO S. MARCELO
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee
MMSD-NPC

(PDI - April 19 & 26, 2005)

PNOC
The Energy Company

PNOC EXPLORATION CORPORATION

Building I, Energy Center, Merritt Road,
Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Telephone Nos.: 893-6001 to 47 local 2101-2104
Direct Line: 840-2024/Fax No.: (632) 840-1459

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC Exploration Corporation (PNOC-EC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and submit sealed bids for the **DRAFT SURVEY SERVICES FOR IMPORTED AND LOCAL COAL SHIPMENTS AND ON-HIRE/OFF-HIRE SURVEY SERVICES FOR MONTHLY TIME-CHARTERED BARGES/TUGBOATS (CM05-1201).** The contract duration is One (1) Year.

The approved budget for this contract per category chargeable against PNOC EC Funds is as follows

Draft Survey for Imported Coal Shipments	– Php	517,800.00
Draft Survey for Local Coal Shipments	– Php	1,384,580.00
On-Hire/Off-Hire Survey Services	– Php	50,000.00

Eligibility and Bid Documents shall be available for issuance at the above address from the Contracts Assistant (c/o Mr. George N. Alejandro/Mr. Carlos L. Mejias) starting April 11, 2005 upon payment of non-refundable fee of PESOS: One Thousand Five Hundred (PHP 1,500.00).

Eligibility of prospective bidders to participate will be based on compliance to eligibility requirements, using pass/fail non-discretionary criteria, as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations-A (IRR-A) of RA 9184, The Government Procurement Reform Act. Only those Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check shall be opened and to be awarded to the Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Responsive Bid, provided that the concerned Bidder shall pass the post-qualification process.

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **April 28, 2:00 PM** at the PNOC EC Conference Room, Bldg. 1, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila.

The Eligibility Requirements and the Bid Documents, composed of two (2) sealed envelope, the first envelope containing the Technical Bid and the second envelope containing the Financial Bid shall be submitted in two (2) sets each to the Bids and Awards Committee not later than **3:00 P.M. of May 11, 2005** at the PNOC EC Conference Room located at the above address and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter. Late bids shall not be accepted.

PNOC EC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any formality therein, or to accept such bids or to award any part thereof to any bidder/s whose bid/s is/are considered most advantageous to PNOC EC.

This publication is also posted in our website at www.pnoc-ec.com.ph and in the DBM website at www.procurementservice.net.

(Sgd.) Ernesto S. San Jose
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – April 19, 2005)

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BUSINESS

Mining firms urge Marcopper to clean up site

By Ronnel W. Domingo

MINING firms have urged Marcopper Mining Corp. to comply with the order of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to immediately clean up its mine site in Marinduque considering the dangers posed on the community.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines said in a statement yesterday that based on the study of its environment committee, rehabilitation should be done quickly because it would be difficult to do the urgent repairs when the rainy days come starting June.

The CMP committee based its study on its review of the recommendations made by the United States Geological Survey.

USGS was part of an American team that assessed the Marinduque mine operations of Marcopper in 2003, as part of the 18-month Marinduque Environmental and Health Study.

The CMF said the following areas needed immediate engineering repairs: Tapian pit, Maguila-guila siltation dam and decant, Bol River dam, Upper and Lower Makulapnit dams, and the Tapian 310 drainage tunnel.

"Proven technologies in mine site clean up such as contouring, capping and relocating the mine waste have also been recommended to help minimize erosion and water contamination," the group said.

The CMP said solving Marcopper's engineering problems should be given "highest priority" considering human and safety concerns.

The CMP said its final report of the engineering, health and environmental issues on the impact of Marcopper's operations in Marinduque has been submitted to the DENR.

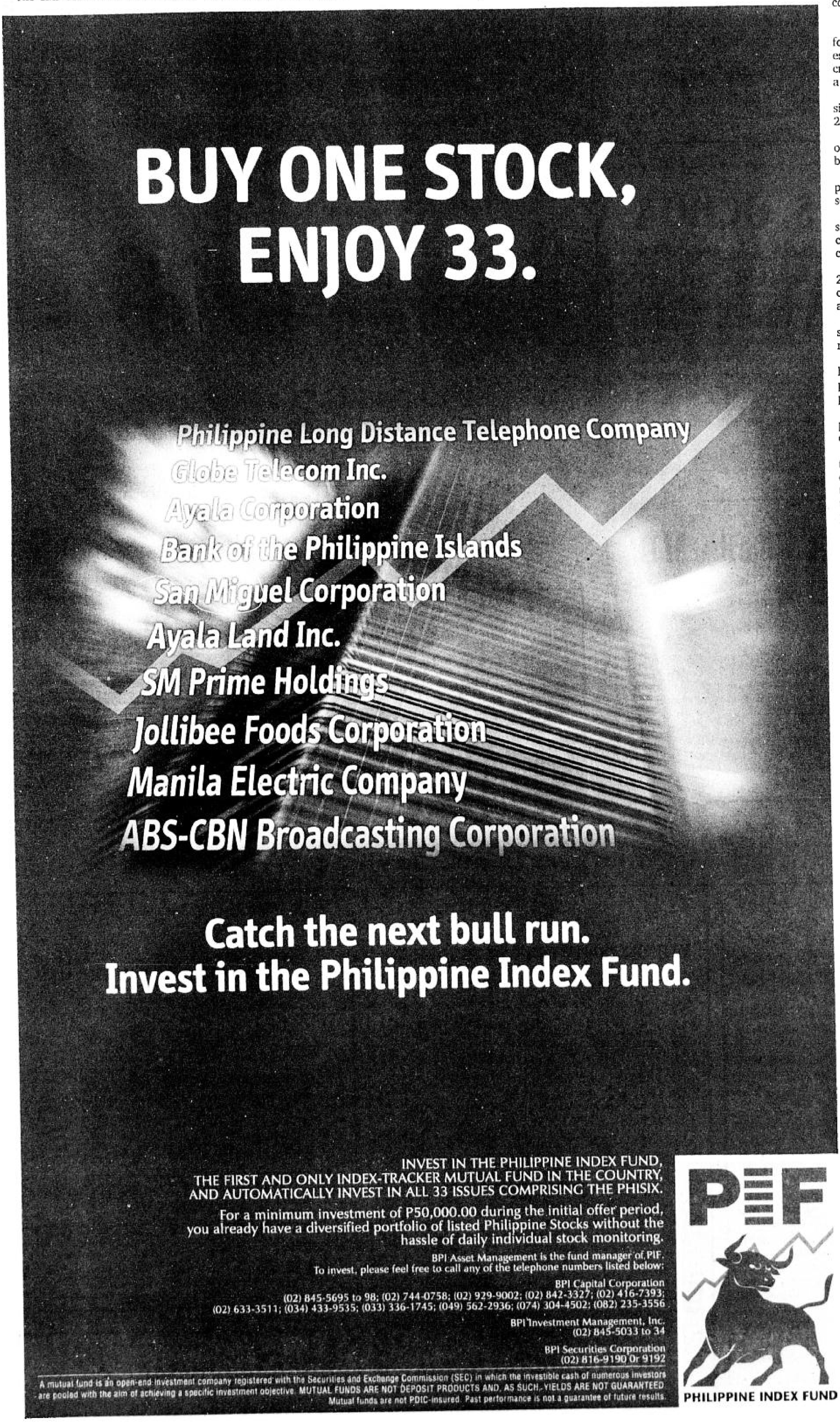
Marinduque is still recovering from the March 1996 disaster wherein approximately 1.6 million cubic meters of tailings, a type of mine waste, were released into the Boac river.

The tailings were released when the plug of the drainage tunnel of the old Tapian open pit, which was used for tailings disposal, gave way.

The tailings were carried along the 26-kilometer water channel and inflicting damage on communities that were dependent on it.

In September 2002, Marcopper's foreign partner Placer Dome Inc. earmarked $12 million for the clean up of Boac river and $1 million as compensation for those affected by the tailings spill.

Aside from USGS, other companies on the American assessment team were the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology Scientists and mine safety specialists from the University of Arizona.



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Neda sees lower GDP, higher inflation rate

THE COUNTRY'S gross domestic product may have shrunk in the first quarter from the last three months of 2004 due to a weak agriculture sector, slow consumer spending and high oil prices, a senior official said yesterday.

"It's a possibility," Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri told reporters when asked if there could have been a quarter-on-quarter contraction in GDP.

"The first quarter will be problematic."

The economy expanded 0.6 percent in the fourth quarter from the third quarter, its slowest pace in three years, as storms damaged crops. Annual growth in 2004 still climbed to a 15-year high.

GDP rose 6.1 percent in 2004, the fastest since 6.2 percent in 1989 and better than the 2003 expansion of 4.7 percent.

"There have been delays in planting because of the typhoons so we don't expect agriculture to be good," Neri said of the first quarter outlook.

"Second is high prices of oil which may depress consumption. We hope to recover in the second half."

The government's investor relations office said on Sunday the impact of high oil prices could shave GDP growth this year to about 5 percent from the earlier target of 5.3 to 6.3 percent.

Although the government is sticking to its 2005 average inflation forecast of 5 to 6 percent, Neri conceded that it would be breached and that the average rate might hit 8 percent.

The forecast was based on an oil price assumption for Dubai crude of $29 to $30 per barrel, compared to the current price around $47.

"High oil prices may stay, that is why steps have to be undertaken to mitigate the impact," Scholastica Cororaton, head of Neda's policy and planning division, said.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, for its part, said it was expecting inflation rate to average at 6.8-7 percent.

The latest BSP forecast, according to Assistant Governor Diwa Guinigundo, does not include other factors that could fuel higher inflation. On the supply side, he said, these included transport fare adjustment, the impact of a 2-percent increase in value added tax, oil price hike beyond $50 per barrel, and another increase in the tariff rate of National Power Corp.

On the demand side, the BSP projection has yet to factor in the impact of possible wage adjustments. *Michelle Remo, Doris Dumlao with a report from Reuters*

Lepanto to spend ₱620M for mine sites development

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

LEPANTO Consolidated Mining Co., the country's biggest gold producer, is earmarking about P620 million for the development of existing mine sites and the purchase of additional mining equipment, it said in its financial report to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

It said mine development would be stepped up this year and this was estimated to cost about P484 million. The additional mining equipment to be acquired would cost the company P140 million.

Lepanto said it would finance the project with company funds and borrowings.

The company also said it had milled 784,720 tons of gold last year, 19 percent higher than the 657,710 tons in 2003.

Gold production also increased by 7 percent to 96,070 ounces last year from 89,420 oz in 2003.

Gold prices continued to increase last year, reaching a 16-year high of $456 per ounce in the fourth quarter. The average price for the year reached $409 per ounce. Gold prices have spiked up by more than 50 percent in the last four years from a low of $272 per ounce in 2001.

With higher gold production and prices, revenue grew by 24 percent to P2.25 billion last year from P1.81 billion in 2003. But because of the increase in the volume of gold processed, production cost also swelled by 17 percent to P1.9 billion from P1.6 billion in 2003.

Last year, net income from operations soared 61 percent to P353 million from P219 million in the previous year.

Net income after tax reached P13 million, or a turnaround from 2003's net loss of P143 million. This was despite deferred foreign exchange losses due to dollar loans.

Lepanto said it had fully repaid its $30 million long-term loan from foreign banks Rothschild and Dresdner.

As of last year, Lepanto has forward gold contracts to sell 169,043 ounces of gold at an average price of $295 per ounce. This will amount to $24 million in 2005 based on marked-to-market prices

Lepanto's assets, including plants and certain pieces of property in Mankayan, Benguet, which were used for its Victoria project or gold production in Benguet are mortgaged as security to Rothschild and Dresdner Banks in connection with the $30-million loan facility.

BULIMIA kills /C4

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Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

Are you controlling?

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

PSYCHIATRISTS agree that people with a behavior pattern of resistance exhibit a deep need to be in control. The compulsion to be in total control of people and situations is rooted in fear.

"Controlling" persons feel they are threatened, thus the drive to control. Dr. Deepak Chopra, in his book "Ageless Body, Timeless Mind," explains: "Unhealthy controlling people lack this flexibility and humility. They insist on being in charge of events and find excuses to make themselves come out on the right side of any conflict."

A controlling behavior eventually creates disharmony in the individual and the environment.

Checklist

Here's a questionnaire to help you find out your control levels. Put a check beside the following statements if they apply to you frequently, most of the time, or almost always. Some of the statements do not sound very flattering, but try to be as candid and honest as you can.

1. I like to be in control of work situations and am much happier working alone than with others.
2. When I'm under pressure, the easiest emotion for me to show is anger or irritability.
3. I rarely tell anyone that I need them.
4. I tend to harbor old hurts. Rather than telling someone that he hurt me, I would rather fantasize about getting even.
5. I have quite a few resentments about the way my brothers and sisters relate to me.
6. The more money I spend on someone means the more I love them.
7. I keep to myself how unfairly others treat me.
8. If a relationship starts to go bad, I secretly wish I could take back everything I bought for that person.
9. If it's my house, the people in it should follow my rules.
10. I find it hard to admit being vulnerable. I don't often say "I'm wrong" and mean it.
11. It's better to nurse my wounds than to show someone that I'm weak.
12. I'm a better talker than listener.
13. What I have to say is usually important.
14. I secretly think others don't take my opinions as seriously as they should.
15. I have a pretty good sense of what's good for people.
16. At least once in my life, I got caught opening someone else's mail.
17. People have called me cynical or negative.
18. I have high standards, which others sometimes mistake for criticism.
19. I tend to be a perfectionist. It bothers me to let a sloppy job pass.
20. I feel uncomfortable if someone gets too close to me emotionally.
21. After a relationship breaks up, I look back and think I was mostly in the right.
22. I'm neat and orderly. I like my way of doing things and find it hard to live with someone who is sloppy.
23. I'm good at scheduling my day and put a high value on punctuality.
24. I'm good at caring for other people's needs, but then I get disappointed when they don't think as much about mine.
25. I have a logical explanation for the way I act, even if others can't always accept it.
26. I don't care that much if other people don't like me.
27. In my opinion, most people don't usually express their true motives for the way they behave.
28. I'm not good at handling noisy or rambunctious children.
29. I still blame my parents for a lot of my problems, but I haven't told them so.
30. When I get into an argument with my spouse or lover, I can't resist bringing up old grievances.

Total score:

Evaluating your score

0-10 points: Your personality isn't dominated by an excessive need to be in control. You are likely to be comfortable with your feelings and tolerant of other people. You realize that you are imperfect, therefore you understand the failings of others. It is easy for you to let events take their own course, and surprises don't throw you off balance. You probably place a high value on spontaneity and the expression of emotions.

10-20 points: Being in control is a frequent issue with you. You have more fears and hurts than you let on, but you don't work hard to resolve these feelings. Being in charge isn't necessarily that important to you, but having your way usually is. You consider yourself organized and efficient, yet it isn't a major event if things get a little out of control. You have found someone whom you can be honest and open with, but there are limits to how much you can safely say or do, even with that person.

Over 20 points: You are a controlling person. You feel control is necessary because people hurt your feelings a lot, and your memory of this goes back to your painful childhood. To keep from being hurt more, you try to control your feelings, which basically means you are very selective about revealing yourself to others. Your overriding need to be in charge or to have things your way drives people away from you, despite the fact that you work very hard to take care of their needs. The only emotion you show easily is anger or irritability. You constantly explain your motives and give reasons for why you are the way you are, but somehow this doesn't help to get you what you want, which is other people's love and affection.

Love and light!

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FORMER Rep. Felix Fuentebella and wife Giselle, Chiqui Fuentebella, Christine and husband Rep. Francis Escudero

ALI SVP Angie Lacson with interior designers Anna Sy and Isabel Asuncion

THE LIVING and dining space of Isabel Asuncion's one-bedroom model unit

JM Rodriquez, Myrza Sison and Jacques Dupasquier at the Expo Exchange

NICCOLO Manahan and Marisse Borlaza

MOI, Georgia Remulla, Pinky Amador and Gilbert Remulla

Two designing women for new condo

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using **Kodak** EasyShare system

I T WAS ladies night out, *palanggas*, when Ayala Land, Inc. (ALI) and Community Innovations, Inc. (CII), held a grand open house for Serendra, "the newest and most innovative low-density residential condominium development in the metropolis."

Located at the 12-hectare property of the fast-rising Global City, Serendra offers a unique living experience. It is a family sanctuary that boasts of "European-inspired planning and Filipino warmth," with *tres* charming residential units, lush gardens and tree-lined walkways and jogging paths.

Invitees were given a tour of model units designed by two architects and interior designers, talented gals with taste and style—**Anna Sy** of C/S Designer Consultancy and **Isabel Asuncion** of Asuncion Berenguer, Inc.

Isabel A. decorated a one-bedroom unit of about 50 sq m, showcasing a free flowing, open design. She said she designed the unit "with a young couple in mind—a couple who is well-traveled and has already lived overseas." She used "twilight colors" like red, orange, caramel, yellow and silvers.

Anna Sy worked on a special three-bedroom unit of about 200 sq m, designing "for a couple in their late 30s to early 40s. It's simpler because I wanted the space to feel light and young." Her design might be minimalist by Filipino standards. She used wood paneling to give the place a sense of warmth.

Serendra's location provides easy access to anywhere you'd like to go, and to everything you need. It was "where restful living in the suburbs and the convenience of living in the heart of the city is beautifully blended without compromises," explained a smiling **Angie Lacson**, *palanggas*.

Check out the model units at the Serendra Pavilion, 26th St., Bonifacio Global City, 9 a.m.-8 p.m. daily. Call 7287000 or e-mail serendra@ayalaland.com or log on to www.serendra.com

Rip-roaring

A philandering politician, a sexy secretary, a nagging wife and a dead body are ingredients of a British farce. But as the Pinoy can no doubt relate to the situation, *palanggas*, the renowned Repertory Philippines brings **Ray Cooney's** English comedy "Whose Wife Is It Anyway?" to our town. The lead character, the very horny Congressman Richard Willey, will no doubt seem familiar.

Repertory cast theater veterans **Miguel Faustmann** and stage icon **Joy Virata**, and young thespians like **Pheona Baranda, Niccolo Manahan, Arnel Carrion**, and the talented **Joel Trinidad, Robbie Guevara, Raul Montesa** and **Marisse Borlaza.**

The play is so funny, darlings. No, actually, it's a riot we could hardly stop laughing. The story unfolds in a five-star hotel by the Manila Bay, with the congressman and his secretary (superbly played by vivacious **Pinky Amador**) about to have a dangerous liaison. A series of unfortunate events follows causing the postponement of the romantic assignation. The congressman and his sidekick (played by funny man **Joel Trinidad**) try to cover up the truth. As the lies get more and more outrageous, the situation becomes more absurd.

There are a few other perks in watching "Whose Wife Is It Anyway?"—Collectiones New York, the cool boutique at the ground level of Glorietta 3, provided some funky, sexy and classy pieces for the production.

The elegant Mandarin Hotel offers amazing freebies with your Rep ticket, like a 10-percent discount at Paseo Uno, and an upgrade to a deluxe room for the local resident's package, on performance days—Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday at 3:30 p.m.

This riotous play is brilliantly directed by the vivacious and adorable **Ana Bitong.**

Double eagle event

That prestigious brand Omega launched its latest line of watches—the Constellation Double Eagle, with a special event, The Omega Cup, *palanggas.*

Omega's involvement in golf includes two prestigious international events—The European Masters in Cans, Montana and the Omega Hong Kong Open.

Articulate **Oliver Hugentobler**, Omega's brilliant sales and marketing project manager who jetted in from Switzerland, told the invitees during the welcome dinner that, "as a sport of character, golf was perfect for Omega to be involved in."

Cybersmart **Marilen Nuñez**, hotshot president of Leading Event Network (LEN) Plus Inc., Omega's special events specialist, together with LEN Plus' rah! rah! team, did a great job, *palanggas.*

At the welcome dinner reception at the Marco Polo Davao Hotel, the stage was set up in the middle of the infinity pool. After the short program, the namedroppables fell off their seats, surprised to see some celebrities jumping into the swimming pool to collect five Omega logos. **Ma. Angelina Tirol** took home an Omega watch. And this was just the teaser...

At 4 p.m., the new Omega Double Eagle Constellation was launched with the special participation of the Philippine Eagle Malagos Garden. After soaring on a sunny sky, the eagle carrying the new styles landed on centerstage—a fabulous launching! So cool.

On the second day, non-golfers joined the Omega Skills Challenge. **Dennis Ladaw** won the prize... another Omega watch, natch!

Oliver Hugentobler, together with Marilen Nuñez, **Ariel Rivera** (past Omega Golf Cup celebrity champion) and Mayor **Rodrigo Duterte** handed out the trophies and more Omega watches to the winners.

The Omega Constellation Double Eagle is available as a chronometer or chronograph-chronometer.

Musicale

The Friends for Cultural Concerns of the Philippines will hold a Cocktail Musicale at the residence of mega-architect and man for all seasons **Gerry Contreras** on April 25. The annual event aims to give young and promising artists exposure to a select group of appreciative patrons.

"This is our way of giving much needed exposure and recognition to the outstanding and talented young, but otherwise unknown, artists and musicians," said an excited **Nene Leonor**, one of our town's hostess with the mostest.

REP. TEDDY Boy Locsin, Jack Duavit with wife Margie and Vicki de Leon at Onstage Greenbelt during the opening night of "Whose Wife Is It, Anyway?"

THE BIG THREE. Omega sales and marketing project manager Oliver Hugentobler, who flew in from Switzerland just for this hot event; Marilen Nuñez, president of Leading Events Network Plus Inc.; and Omega's Mike Luna

DAVAO City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte

EYE-CATCHER Marlene dela Peña

SUCCESSFUL events publicist Joselito "Toots" Tolentino

WEST MEETS EAST. Blonde Miss Denmark, Thea Froekjaer, with dark-haired Jomari Yllana

HOT CELEBS. Ian Veneracion and Jong Cuenco

DASHING BROTHERS. Val, former Sen. Tito, Maru and Vic Sotto

WINNERS. Men's Division Class C, Jake Roxas; Class B, Tony Reyes; Paulina Sotto, Ladies' Division; former Sen. Tito Sotto, overall champion; Richard Gomez, Class A winner

GORGEOUS couple Richard Gomez and wife Lucy Torres with beautiful daughter Juliana

FCCP special event organizers (seated) Chloe Romulo Periquet; special events director Fortune A. Ledesma; Adam Lady Mellie Ablaza, FCCP president; chair Chit Gohu; and Carrie Bautista; (standing) top architect Gerry Contreras; civic society organizers Helen Ong, Nene Leonor and Joey Soriano

Better than psychics

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

IT happened again last week. A prediction of a great natural calamity reportedly coming from a psychic healer spread by e-mail and cell phone text messages causing many Metro Manilans to panic.

What made the report particularly scary and credible for many people was that it gave specific date and time of the disaster and the name of the person who supposedly made the prediction. On the day of the predicted event, I heard some employees in Makati went on half-day leave.

Here's one of several variations of the text messages I received last week:

"Sr. Reodica who predicted the tsunamis, said there would be an Intensity 9 earthquake at 5 p.m., April 14, in Manila. Please pray hard and be in a safe place."

I was asked what I thought of it. As April 14 neared, I received more texts saying essentially the same thing.

I don't know how many times I had to text worried friends not to believe it. I assured them nothing of the sort would happen. I told them I never even heard of the person who reportedly made the prediction and only learned about her from the text messages.

Weakness

One weakness in the way we think (or not think) is that we easily believe statements coming from so-called psychics and fortunetellers, although very few of them are really gifted with strong prophetic vision.

But we Filipinos are not alone in this tendency. Even Westerners who are generally left brain-dominant and therefore highly analytical, compared to the right brain-dominant and highly intuitive Pinoys, also tend to believe in psychics easily.

I remember an American fortuneteller who became very famous simply because of one correct prediction, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Despite the fact that she fell flat on her face with her other predictions, she became very popular internationally, and began writing columns in newspapers and magazines, and appearing on many television talk shows throughout the United States.

The fact that a fortuneteller's prediction comes true once does not mean her next predictions will also be true. And this can lead to tragedy.

I am reminded of the story of the sixth century King Croesus of Lydia (now part of Turkey). He was itching to invade Persia, but he wanted to be sure he would be victorious. So he thought of consulting a good psychic or fortuneteller.

But how could he tell whether a fortuneteller was good or not? Being a rational and cautious person, the King devised an ingenious test. He sent out seven emissaries to consult the best psychics throughout the Mediterranean. On the seventh day the emissary was to ask the psychic this question: "What is King Croesus doing at this time?"

One emissary went to the famous Oracle at Delphi in Greece. Before he could even ask the question, the high priestess was already in a trance and said to him, "I see a man boiling a lamb in a cauldron made of brass with a brass cover."

Right answer.

She turned out to be the only one who was right. On that very day that the King's emissary was at the Oracle at Delphi, King Croesus, on a whim, decided to slaughter a lamb, and boil it in a brass cauldron with a brass cover.

So the King hurried off to Greece and consulted the great Oracle at Delphi. He asked what would happen if he invaded Persia. The Oracle replied: "A mighty kingdom will be vanquished."

King Croesus invaded Persia but lost! He forgot to ask the Oracle: "Which kingdom would be vanquished?"

Lesson: Never believe the predictions of a psychic, unless there is some way you can verify, validate or confirm his/her statement.

Speaking of big quakes or volcanic eruptions, a more reliable predictor of impending danger is to watch the behavior of some animals and insects. If you see snakes coming out of their lairs in great numbers, or rats and ants scampering around like crazy, better look for safe places at once. They are more credible than psychics and fortunetellers when it comes to foretelling natural disasters.

Address letters to this column to Prince Plaza I, 106 Legazpi St., Legazpi Village, Makati City. Call 8107245 or 8926806 for information on seminars I conduct. E-mail jlicauco@edsamail.com.ph or visit http://jlicauco.shorturl.com. Listen to my dzMM radio program 7-8 p.m. every Sunday.

We easily believe statements from so-called psychics and fortunetellers, although very few of them are really gifted with strong prophetic vision

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DERMA Link Whitening Soap, which will soon be in the market, offers four ways to clearer skin. Choose from Papaya Squalene, Papaya Crystal, Tawas White and Papaya Green with Squalene Oil. The soap helps moisturize and smoothen skin, remove skin blemishes and allergies. It is suitable for the whole family. Call 6206893 or 0915-5698315.

'Hataw' summer promo

TOBY'S Sports is offering *hataw* deals on summer sports gear.

Check out hot discounts from leading sports brands like Adidas, Nike, Reebok, Dunlop, Wilson, Tribu, Eusebio, Yonex, Kontrol USA, Equipe, RSL, Montanara and many more. Get great gifts when you buy selected items in the kayaks, fishing, cycling, badminton and basketball categories.

Until May 14, you will also get a chance to win a three-day, two-night stay at Le Soleil de Boracay Toby's Summer Hataw Getaway raffle promo, in cooperation with Asian Spirit.

Every P1,000 purchase entitles you to a raffle stub. The more entries, the more chances of winning. Other prizes are Toby's gift certificates, Eastpak backpacks and Kontroi USA sunglasses.

Call Toby's Sports at 6424414 or visit www.tobys.com

Free lectures on health

HEALTHQUEST Medi-Spa and Detox Center, a new wellness facility, gives a free lecture on health at 6:30 p.m. every Monday at the Penthouse, 23 F. dela Rosa cor. Esteban Abada, Loyola Heights Condominium, Quezon City.

The center aims to provide people with the right kind of information so they will be able to take charge of maintaining their own health.

It is committed to increasing people's awareness on healthy lifestyles.

People can bring up their own questions and participate in the discussions. Snacks are served after the lecture.

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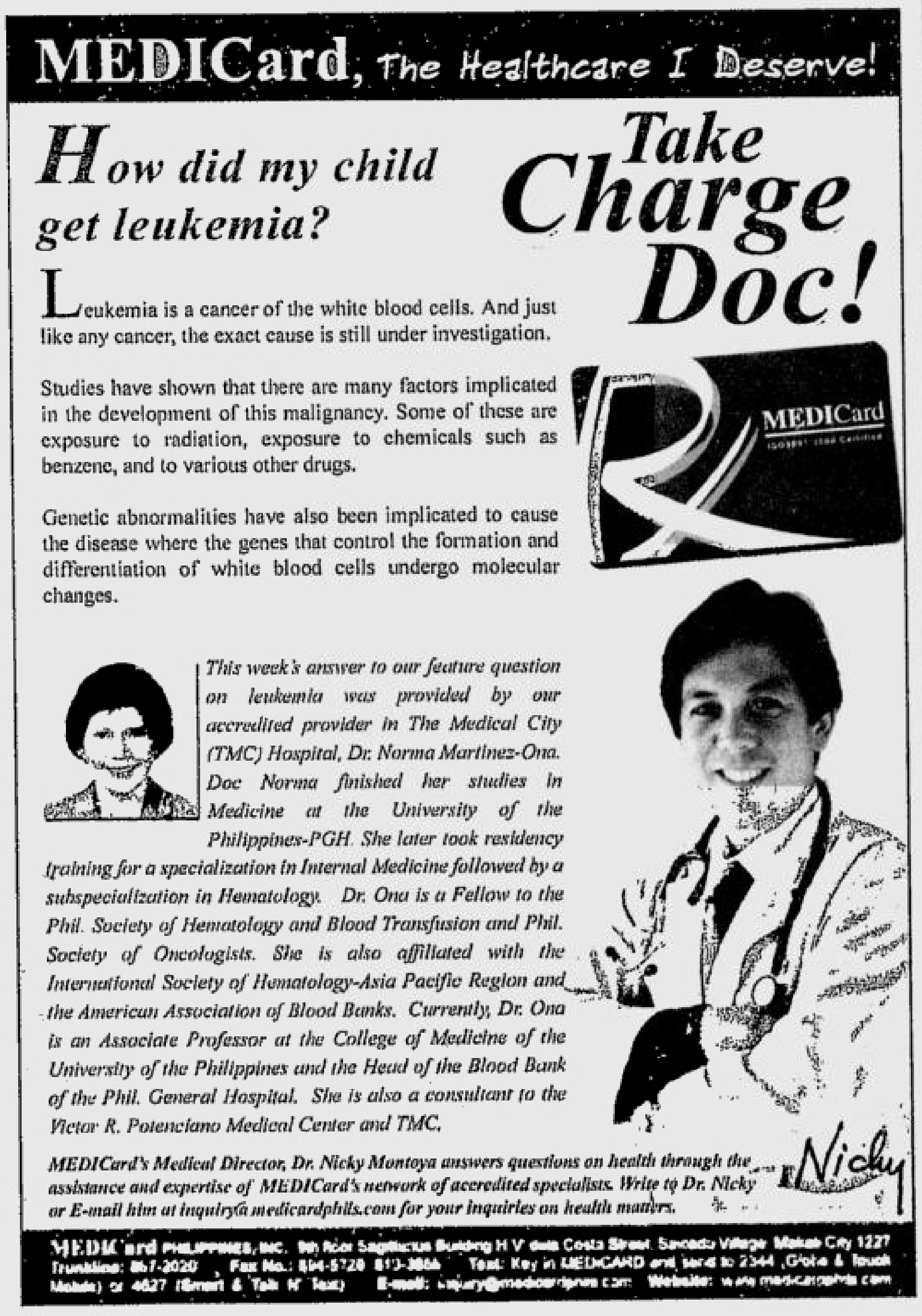
MEDICard, The Healthcare I Deserve!

How did my child get leukemia?

Take Charge Doc!

Leukemia is a cancer of the white blood cells. And just like any cancer, the exact cause is still under investigation.

Studies have shown that there are many factors implicated in the development of this malignancy. Some of these are exposure to radiation, exposure to chemicals such as benzene, and to various other drugs.

Genetic abnormalities have also been implicated to cause the disease where the genes that control the formation and differentiation of white blood cells undergo molecular changes.

This week's answer to our feature question on leukemia was provided by our accredited provider in The Medical City (TMC) Hospital, Dr. Norma Martinez-Ona. Doc Norma finished her studies in Medicine at the University of the Philippines-PGH. She later took residency training for a specialization in Internal Medicine followed by a subspecialization in Hematology. Dr. Ona is a Fellow to the Phil. Society of Hematology and Blood Transfusion and Phil. Society of Oncologists. She is also affiliated with the International Society of Hematology-Asia Pacific Region and the American Association of Blood Banks. Currently, Dr. Ona is an Associate Professor at the College of Medicine of the University of the Philippines and the Head of the Blood Bank of the Phil. General Hospital. She is also a consultant to the Victor R. Potenciano Medical Center and TMC.

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for your inquiries on health matters.

Nicky

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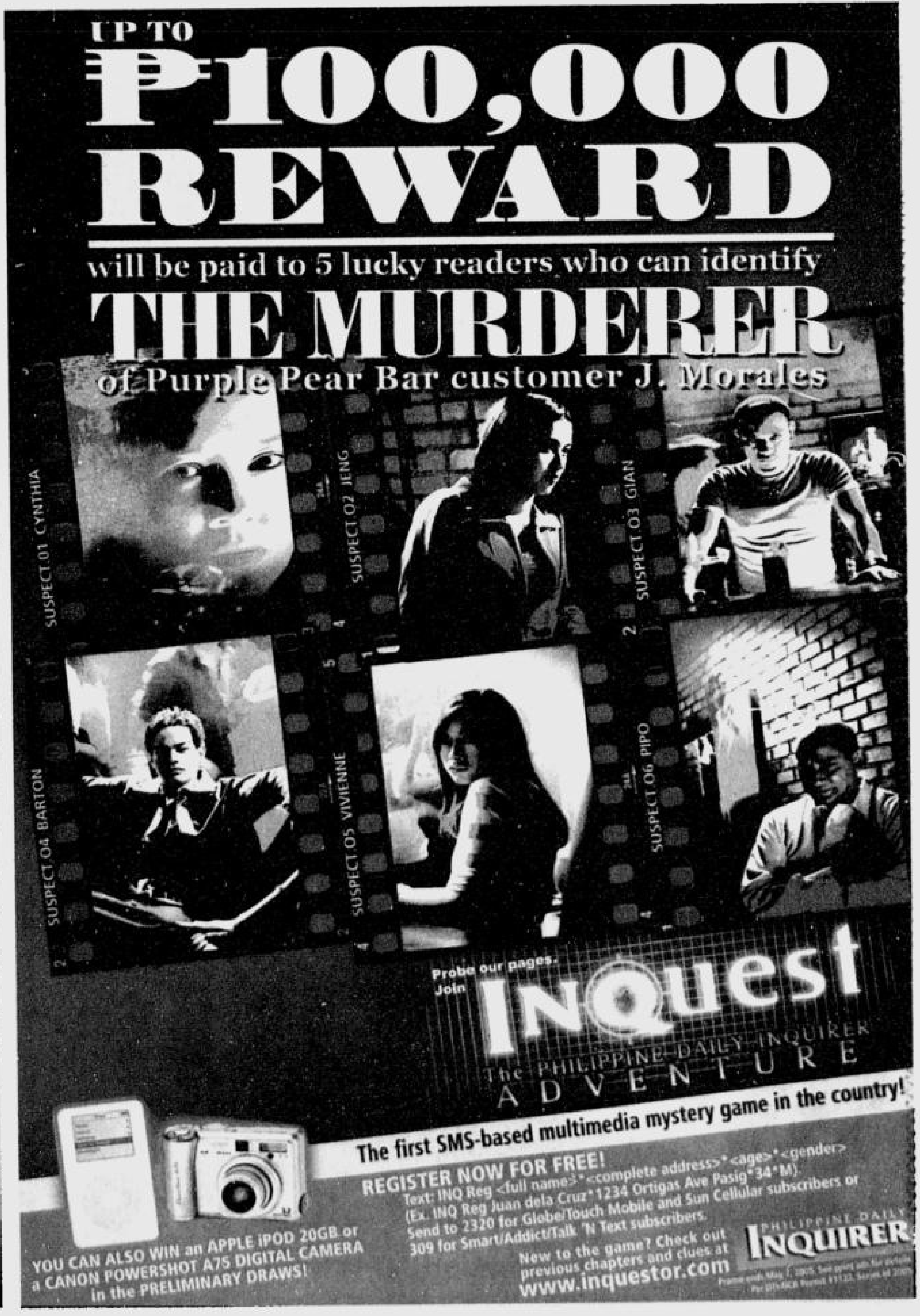
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Bulimia kills

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

WHEN Princess Diana died in 1997, I felt like I lost a friend. This was probably because she was honest enough to admit being bulimic.

She was one of the first celebrities to call attention to an eating disorder that had become rampant. Other well-known personalities who are self-confessed former bulimics are Jane Fonda and Cheryl Boone, daughter of singer Pat Boone.

Bulimia

Lindsey Hall, author of "Understanding and Overcoming Bulimia," says the disorder is a food obsession characterized by repeated eating binges followed by purges of forced vomiting, prolonged fasting, or abuse of laxatives, enemas or diuretics. The most common practice is to binge and vomit.

Bulimia is not new. It was widely practiced by the Greeks and Romans. In fact, bulimia is Greek for "ox-hunger" or "insatiable appetite."

Bulimia is not "compulsive" or "binge" eating. Secretly eating large amounts of food is common to both disorders but, unlike compulsive eaters, bulimics throw up their food.

More prone

Food is the substance of abuse for all eating disorders. It is used to cope with stress and pressures. Experts say 95 percent of bulimics are women.

Hall, a bulimic for nine years, calls food the "good girl's drug," more socially acceptable than illegal drugs or alcohol. It is available everywhere and, even if you eat large amounts in public, nobody will call you an addict. Eating is pleasurable and provides instant relief from painful feelings.

Hall explains, "Bulimics are often considered 'ideal' children, and will go out of their way to be 'people pleasers.' They present an acceptable façade—seeming outgoing, confident and independent—while anxious feelings bubble underneath. Out of an unfulfilled need for recognition, the bulimic may develop insecurities about her appearance, competence and ability to be loved."

Studies show that many bulimics are victims of emotional, physical or sexual abuse as children.

Linda Flechter, a psychotherapist specializing in eating disorders, says, "Eating disorders are not primarily about food, exercise or health—they are about a desperate struggle for perfect looks, a perfect body, a perfect life."

Hall adds, "Most bulimics have been preoccupied with eating and diet for years, but the initial binge-purge episodes might be triggered by specific traumatic events like marriage, divorce in the family, death of a loved one or a lover's rejection."

Princess Diana said comments about how "pudgy" she looked on television during her early years on the spotlight drove her to diet severely. As pressure built up in her marriage, she increasingly turned to food. A vicious cycle of bingeing and vomiting followed.

Killer

Many people think bulimia's side effects are minimal compared to anorexia. But Hall warns, "Excessive vomiting can cause death from cardiac arrest, kidney failure, impaired metabolism due to electrolyte imbalance or severe dehydration."

Terri Schiavo, the woman at the center of a right-to-die controversy, was a famous example of how bulimia affected health. Many people knew she was in a "persistent vegetative state" and fed through a feeding tube for 15 years but few were aware of how she got into that situation.

News reports said Schiavo had a history of weight problems, weighing as much as 200 pounds in high school. As a young married woman, her friends and husband suspected she had an eating disorder.

In 1990, a cardiac arrest deprived her brain of blood and oxygen. Doctors determined it was caused by "bulimia-induced hypokalemia" or abnormally low levels of potassium in the blood.

Other side effects

Bulimia's other serious side effects are rotten teeth from constant exposure to bile brought up from the stomach during vomiting, digestive disorders, amenorrhea (ceasing of menstruation), malnutrition, anemia, infected glands, blisters in the throat, internal bleeding, hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and a ruptured stomach or esophagus.

Emotional side effects include social isolation, fear of being found out, anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem and feelings of guilt, self-disgust and hopelessness.

> Studies show many bulimics are victims of emotional, physical or sexual abuse as children

Signs

The American Psychiatric Association says bulimia is indicated by the following behaviors:

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating (rapid consumption of a large amount in less than two hours)
- At least three of the following: consumption of high-caloric, easily digestible food during a binge; inconspicuous or secret eating; termination of such episodes by self-induced vomiting; repeated attempts to lose weight through severely restrictive diets, self-induced vomiting, laxatives or diuretics (substances that increase urine production); or frequent weight fluctuations greater than ten pounds due to alternating binges and fasts
- Awareness that the eating pattern is abnormal and fear of not being able to stop eating voluntarily
- Depressed mood and self-disgust following eating binges

No cure

Like alcoholism, there is no cure for bulimia but it can be controlled. I have been bulimia-free for 30 years.

Professional help from a psychiatrist specializing in eating disorders is essential. Sometimes anti-depressants are recommended if a person suffers from depression or obsessive-compulsive disorder. A nutritionist can teach how to eat normally.

Healing starts by acknowledging the problem. If the bulimic is in denial, very little can be done.

* * *

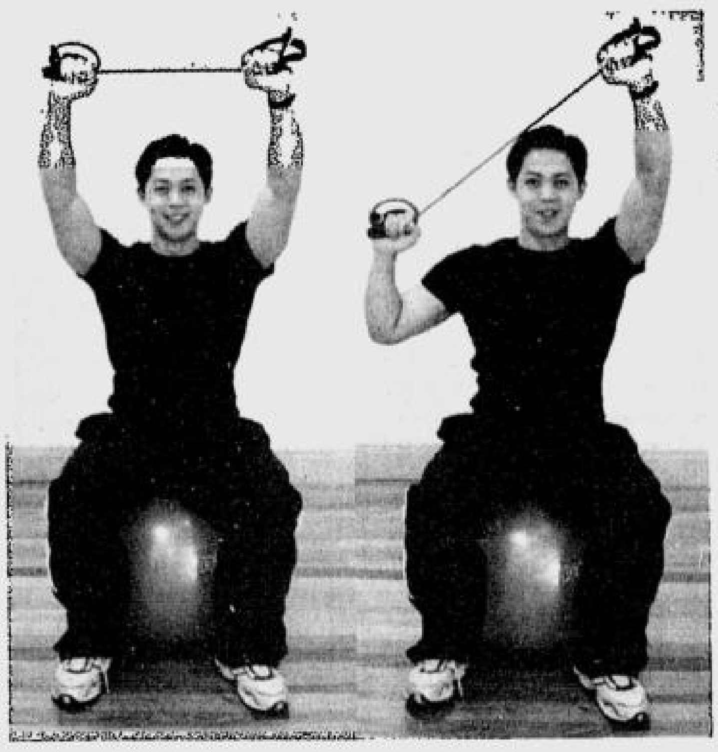
The Association of Fitness Professionals will hold a one-day fitness seminar April 23. Call 0917-5181202 or 9202762.

Next week:* *Famous eating disorder deaths

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info.

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Rubberband pulldown on stability ball



STRENGTHENS the muscles at the sides of the back

Equipment:

- Stability ball (use a chair as a substitute or do the exercise standing up)
- Rubber band (use imported exercise bands/tubes or substitute a 4-ft long rubber band bought in the local market or hardware)

Exercise technique:

1. Sit down on the ball with your feet flat on the floor.
2. Loosely wrap the ends of the rubber band around your hands until you have the right amount of resistance or tension.
3. Raise both arms overhead. Hold one arm steady as the "anchor arm" while you pull down with the other arm.
4. Return to starting position.
5. Do the desired number of repetitions. Do the other side.

Performance tips:

1. Exhale as you pull downward; inhale as you bring the arm up.
2. Start the downward pulling movement by pretending that you are squeezing a small ball in between your armpit and the side of your upper body.
3. Pull your elbow downward and not sideways.
4. Keep the movement in front of the body. Do not try to pull the rubber band behind your neck.
5. To increase the resistance, use two bands.

Repetitions:

Do 12-15 repetitions on each side.

Padre de Pamilya

Cherry Lopez
25 years old
Bunsong anak
Inaalagaan ang ama

Para kay Cherry, hindi biro ang maging Padre de Pamilya.
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